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NEW ZEALAND  
OBSERVER ~ A Schoolmaster  
Looks at America

*By J. E. Strachan*

New York : Morningside Heights

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS

1940

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## PREFACE

THE author of these letters is the principal of the high school in Rangiora, New Zealand, a town of some two thousand inhabitants, located about twenty miles north of Christchurch on the southernmost of the two islands which comprise the smallest and least populous Dominion of the British Empire. The letters were written during February and March, 1938, while Mr Strachan and his wife were traveling in the United States on a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. They were addressed to his colleagues and students in the high school and were intended solely as a means of sharing an exciting experience with friends at home. Permission to make them more widely available was granted by the author at the request of the Corporation.

As a professional educator, Mr Strachan was chiefly interested in our educational machinery; hence he gives much attention to new experiments in primary and secondary education which were under way at the time of his visit. But his conviction that in an important sense the school must always be the product of its time and place provokes him to much thoughtful comment on the values and goals which characterize the contemporary American culture and give it direction.

If Mr Strachan's pen leaves occasional traces of acid, his



judgments are on the whole kindly and sympathetic. Even when our methods seem slightly mad and our thinking hopelessly confused he gives us credit for the courage with which we face up to our problems and the energy and confidence with which we attack them; and if the curricula of some of our schools remind him of the Mock Turtle's course of study (reeling and writhing and the various branches of arithmetic—ambition, distraction, uglification, and derision), he nevertheless applauds our refusal to be fettered by tradition. That he finds much to admire in our progressive schools is not remarkable; in a country where centralized control of education has tended to discourage experiments, he has insisted that due recognition be given to variations in ability and interest and has so organized the curriculum of his own school as to give his students comprehensive and useful knowledge about themselves and about the world in which they must live.\*

The letter is perhaps the most intimate of literary forms. It tells us more about its author than does a novel, a poem, or even an essay. The author of this particular batch reveals himself as a perceptive fellow with a light touch, a lively sense of humor, and an idealism tempered by long pre-occupation with practical affairs.

CHARLES DOLLARD

Carnegie Corporation of New York  
New York  
June, 1940

\* See J. E. Strachan, *The School Looks at Life* (New Zealand Council for Educational Research, Wellington, 1938).

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~ Letter I ~

THE PACIFIC

We have aboard the *Mariposa* a farmer from Gippsland, a man of limited understanding but strong convictions. His obsession is the land. This is the first time he has been out of sight of earth that he could plough. This uneasy waste of water worries him. For the first few days he paced the decks, gazing at the horizon with anxious astonishment. Several times he drew my attention to the fact that there was "an awful lot of water round the ship," which, he supposed, was kept from flooding the land only "because the

earth rotates twenty-four times a day." Well, one has only to cross the Pacific to realize that the old Quaker sea-captain of *Moby Dick* did well to advise the young man who wanted to see the world to go on deck and have a good look at the offing.

We have been nearly fourteen days at sea, driving along at twenty knots. We have seen land three times, when we called at Suva, Pagopago, and Honolulu. We have sighted only one ship. For the rest there has been nothing but sea and sky, flying fish, and a few sea birds. The ship is a little self-contained world as isolated, apparently, in time and space as one of the asteroids. I say "apparently," because the man in the wireless cabin has another sense. He is good enough to dole out a little meagre news from the unseen world of men. We have learned that a billy goat butted through a plate-glass window in Waipukurau and that the husband of a movie star has told Roosevelt how to stop the trade recession. But for the most of us what really breaks down the isolation is meeting passengers who are, like ourselves, in a state of suspended animation between the world of their memories and the world of their hopes.

An ocean liner is a little bit of all the world—a kind of cross section of world civilization. We in New Zealand are just about as unc cosmopolitan as any community could be, so we are the more impressed by this casual throwing together of elements from all over the earth. Scarcely two people on the ship have the same background, the same tradition, the same outlook, or the same way of life. One gets many points of view on different questions. Once the reserve of the stranger is broken down there can be most interesting conversation and discussion. Everyone has something to communicate, and one has the feeling that almost anything may

come out of these communications. Currents of life from Anatolia and Australia, from Salt Lake City and Bandoeng meet and swirl in the smoking room. Most of the eddies, perhaps, break up again at once, but some endure, and the future is not quite what it would have been. There has been some modification of opinion—some change of plan—which may matter little or may affect the course of history.

On most nights we have a picture entertainment in the lounge. It is poor stuff as a rule. I often think there is more real drama in the audience than on the screen, if one had the wit to see it. Here, for example, are some of the real actors among the cabin-class passengers. At my table is a man who has been a mining prospector for forty years. He claims to have located more gold than any other man alive. He once took half a dozen burros into Death Valley and located the first gold found there. In Rhodesia after copper, he traveled with a writer who contracted brain fever during the expedition. He got him back to America, but the man never fully recovered and ultimately blew his brains out at Colorado Springs. At some time or other he has been on the main mining areas from Alaska to Waihi. Mostly he is very talkative, but there are times when he drinks silently, seriously, and alone.

The other man at our table looks as if he had been sitting a lot in the sun. He has a name that looks all right end-on, or if you leave out the seven-letter anagram in the middle, and that just about describes the man. We can make a guess at his origin as somewhere in southeastern Europe, and he says he has spent the last twelve years in the copper mines of Australia, but the years between are known only to his Maker.

At the next table are a Swiss and his wife who manage a



pension at Locarno and a Dutch tea planter from Java taking a long road home to Holland. Then there is a Scots business man who was in Shanghai until November last and tells gruesome tales of the Japanese invasion and the frightful results of bombing from the air.

There are several members of a vaudeville company with the restless habits of gypsies, and a stalking American with a cigar, whom I have never seen sit down except at his meals. We have also an inventor of astronomical clocks—a huge man on a round tour of the world's observatories—and a Devon man who has been to Australia to find how his investments are getting on. But for the most part the passengers are Australians paying a visit to America or Americans returning from a visit to Australia. Each is convinced that the land of his birth is "God's Own Country."

The round of life on shipboard, especially when the seas are as rough as ours have been, is apt to be a bit monotonous, and many of the passengers are concerned with their own discomforts and chiefly anxious to keep themselves as quiet as possible. These stay in their beds or sit about on deck chairs. Deck games are difficult on a rough sea, and the swimming bath has a tendency to empty itself. Sometimes in the forenoon there is horse racing with dummy horses and a betting machine, and the evenings are divided between talkies and a speculative game called Keno. One evening we had a welcome change in an orchestral concert. There has been no dancing in the cabin class, partly because it has been so rough and partly because there is so little deck space.

Our ports of call, as you know, have been Suva, Pago-pago, and Honolulu, with San Pedro and San Francisco still ahead. I saw Suva eleven years ago and was glad to find a big improvement in the town and its surroundings. It

seemed much cleaner, for one thing, and a lot of the old ramshackle buildings have gone. I was astonished at the building that is going on. I was told that the discovery of a rich gold field has protected Suva from the worst effects of the depression, and this fact may account in part for the improvement. Still there is little planning of the town as a whole.

We sighted the Fiji Islands before dawn and passed through the break in the coral reef that shelters Suva harbour. Along the water's edge coconut palms form the hem of the luxuriant green forest that covers the hillsides everywhere in the tropics. The islands are volcanic—andesite, I think—and weathering has given them a fantastically serrated sky line. Near Suva a mighty vertical pillar of rock stands out on the horizon. It is, I suppose, the plug of lava that once filled the pipe of a volcano that has since weathered away. On a river flat at the head of the small bay the business part of Suva has been built. The residential part stretches around the bay and back into the forested hills.

Suva was hot. Even the inhabitants admitted that. The Public Service had slowed down a little as a concession to the heat, the Hindu labour gangs apparently had not, and the Fijians and Polynesians didn't need to, for they don't work at all. Why should they? They were nicely adjusted to their world before the whites came with crazy ideas about work. We had a better opportunity to see how beautiful the Suva district is than I had on my earlier visit. Thanks to the kindness of Mr Buckhurst and his wife, we had a drive around the residential area and up to the reservoir, and saw something of the glorious profusion of colour that the sun has given to the tropics.

The gardens were ablaze with crotons. The golden

shower trees were at their best; pink shower had gone off a little but was still beautiful; hibiscus, frangipani, flamboyant trees, tulip trees, and something I heard called the bird-of-paradise tree all contributed to the riot of colour. Then, of course, there are the fine palms, coconuts everywhere, royal palms usually lining streets and roads, and date palms with their massive heads and sculptured trunks. The traveler's palm has foliage like a gigantic fan held upright so that it collects and holds a lot of water (and breeds mosquitoes). The breadfruit tree is also well known, and the banana, about forty varieties, is everywhere.

I think the tree I like best is the dainty pawpaw, or what in Hawaii is called the papaya; its beautifully carved and slender trunk, its dainty cluster of fruit, and its delicate colouring seem strangely alien to the boisterous riot of tropic vegetation, like a flute note among the saxophones.

From the commercial point of view the important plants are coconuts, pineapples, and bananas. The pineapple of Fiji is a fine fruit indeed, especially the smaller bush variety used locally. A larger fruit is used for canning. I was told that the industry is now being strongly revived after the trade depression.

There are several elements in the population here. The whites form a small minority, mainly concerned in administration and, in an executive capacity, in business. I noticed that the big Australian shipping firm of Burns, Philp has built a great department store and trading depot. This is probably the most important trading firm in the south-western Pacific and the chief political influence in the islands. Fiji is administered as a crown colony, with a governor general who takes a deep practical interest in the islands; it

is he who has promoted town planning in the islands, with Mr Buckhurst as the public servant in charge.

Education comes under the New Zealand government, but there are many mission schools. There was one I would have liked to see, but the headmaster was unfortunately in some other part of the islands. We saw his wife, who told us something about the school. It has a well-developed agricultural course and is run much as you expect New Zealand schools to be, that is to say, successful from the departmental point of view.\*

The native element in the population is the Fijian, mainly Melanesian, tall, dark-skinned, with a great mop of uncombable fuzzy hair. He has the physique of a Roman gladiator but is disinclined to exert himself except in games. The dandies bleach or dye their hair ginger. There is a good deal of Polynesian mix, and a fair number of pure Polynesians—Tongans mainly, I think. These are brown folks with straight hair, who resemble the Samoan and the pure Maori. Many are employed as servants in the homes of the whites.

The Hindus swarm all over the place. They are a weedy lot. The children are pretty little things, but they soon lose their good looks. The Hindus were brought in to solve the labour problem on the plantations, but it seems to me that they are the biggest problem in the islands. It is another case of putting profits before the welfare of the native race. In time there will be no pure Fijians. The only other element in the population that I noticed was a few Chinese, who, as usual, are in the retail trade.

\* Control of all public education in New Zealand centers in one government department directed by a minister of education.

Leaving Suva on Thursday evening we headed for Pago-pago, the American naval base in the Samoan group. We had just heard of the fiery extinction of the *Samoan Clipper*, but there was more rumour than real news. Amongst the unfounded rumours was one that the bodies and the wrecked plane had been recovered and that this ship was to take them to America. Actually the ship spent about an hour in the early morning seeking for some signs, but there was nothing except a doubtful smear of oil on the sea swell.

Pagopago is a beautiful, landlocked harbour with the usual coral reef across the entrance. The mountains surrounding it are very steep, so that the harbour is a little like Milford Sound in New Zealand, though not so magnificent—more like Rabaul, I should say. There is no dock, and landing must be by launch. The small township consists almost entirely of buildings connected with the naval administration, with the bungalow homes of the officers and their families.

Everything is as neat and clean as the deck of a battleship. That, of course, gives no impression of the colourful beauty of the place. Remembering Maugham's story, "Rain," which was written of Pagopago, we expected at this season to get a tropical downpour, but instead we had brilliant sunshine which brought out the vivid colour contrasts of the place. The beach sands were golden yellow, the sea so intensely blue that you felt you could fill your fountain pen from it, and the flaming reds of flowering shrubs against the intense green background made a startling contrast. Later, when we saw the native bazaar on the green lawns by the side of the road, we found the same vivid colouring.

The Samoans seem very happy in their beautiful world. One couldn't help liking them. They were all smiling and

cheerful, and everyone we passed gave us a pleasant good morning. In the bazaar they did not press you to buy anything, nor expect you to argue about the price. They had beautifully woven mats, kava bowls, shells, model canoes, and other curios for sale, and there was a fixed price for everything. I tried to buy a Samoan baby, but the mother just rolled with laughter. One little fellow made friends with us and showed us the thatched, native open-air school he attended. So far as I could judge there is no attempt to make Americans of the natives. Their education is to fit them to live in their own world and to get the best out of their own lives. I think the Americans have done well to leave the Samoans unspoilt. I believe that in mandated Samoa one of the aims of education, as officially stated by the New Zealand department, is to inculcate loyalty to the British flag. It would be.

Off again at noon. Our stay was all too short. I must come back some day to this tropical gem in the blue Pacific.

Five nights and four days at sea brought us within sight of the Aloha Tower at Honolulu. The Hawaiian band played the ship into dock, and soon everyone was ashore. We were in for a very busy time. Dr and Mrs Felix Keesing were waiting for us on the dock with leis to hang around our necks, and a car to let us see something of the island of Oahu.

What a beautiful drive we had! Much of it was familiar to me, but somehow the Nuuanu valley with its wonderful garden homes, and the amazing colourful view from the precipitous Pali seemed more beautiful than ever. The Pali is the only pass over the great volcanic rift that cuts across the island. It was here that King Kamehameha drove his enemies and established himself as the undisputed ruler of

the Hawaiian Islands. This same line divides the wet from the dry side of the island. Beyond it are dairying country, sugar plantations, and rice fields.

We swung down the dizzy curves on the other side, and then, instead of taking the long road to the west which goes around the island, we took the new military road to the east past the sugar plantations, through a native village, along the rugged scoria coast line with its famous blow-hole, and so back by Diamond Head and Kaimaki to the Waikiki Beach, and the great seaside hotels, Royal Hawaiian and Moana. When I was here in 1926 a residential area was being developed. It is now completed as a model area on a plan similar to those we have discussed in our planning themes at school. I was amazed at the change. Living conditions here must come very near to being ideal.

Our next visit was to the University. There Dr Keesing is lecturing on anthropology, a very live subject in the islands, where so many races are living together. We went into the great library, which was full of students hard at work. Here and on the great campus with its groves of trees one gets a fair cross section of the Hawaiian populace, except that the pure Hawaiian element is not proportionally represented. Japanese predominate; the white element probably comes next; then Chinese, Filipinos, and Portuguese. It is astonishing to think of them all studying together in the same university.

I asked whether there had been any repercussions of the trouble in the East and was told that there had been nothing obvious. The second-generation Japanese are apparently Americanized to such an extent that they are not much concerned with the national viewpoint of their fathers. Later in the day I was not so sure, for I found that there is a good

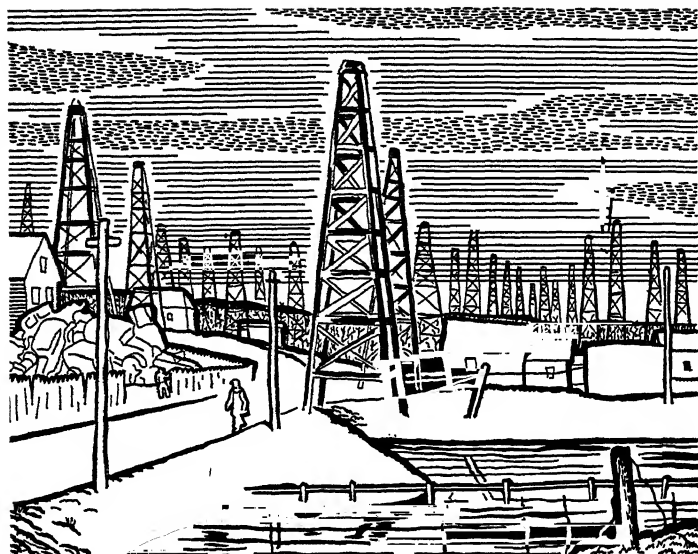
## **Man**

deal of pro-Japanese propaganda going on in the schools, and causing some anxiety to such bodies as the Institute of Pacific Relations.

Dr Keesing had to go off to meet his students, so we were handed over to Mr Tennent, whom I had met some years ago in Shanghai. On the way we called on Mr. Loomis, of the Institute of Pacific Relations permanent staff. Lunch at the Pacific Club, and then a bit of shopping. The shops are a great temptation. Fortunately I left early for the ship, for there I found a radio message through a Honolulu amateur which put us in touch with home. I was glad to hear that all was well, and I sent a reply through the same channel.\*

\* The author is an enthusiastic amateur radio sender.





~ Letter 2 ~

## THE BRAVE NEW WORLD

We are in America. To convince ourselves we bought a newspaper in Los Angeles. Here are some of the headlines:

FITT DEMANDS BOMB PROBE POLICE BE SUSPENDED

HIT WRIGHT'S "WHITE FLAME" ALIBI

SIFT DEATH BLAST AT DU PONT PLANT

SEC. BOARD OF DIRECTORS HALTED BY COUNCIL

HUNT HIGHER-UPS IN JAPAN SHIP BLAST PLOT

BEHEAD CHINA GEN: GIVE HIM FINE COFFIN

FLIPPER FLAPS 3 MILES TO RANCH AND RETURN  
HOUSING BILL SIDE TRACKED IN ANTI-LYNCH BILL  
VICTIM OF SNEEZING GETS WHISTLING EAR

Is it childishness, insanity, or just that Americans talk another language? The last, I think—a language that is to ours as gin sling is to buttermilk. But why on earth should a newspaper think it worth while to devote half a column to tell us that a society woman at a New York dinner table spilt some berries on the tablecloth? Here is a new scale of values to which we must accustom ourselves.

San Pedro, the seaport of Los Angeles, is about twenty-five miles from the heart of the city. Visitors coming to the city by this route do not get a good impression. It is like entering a house by way of the backyard. Forests of oil-well derricks may be impressive, but they are definitely ugly. Still uglier are the numerous junk piles, wrecking yards, and Negro slum areas through which the electric railway runs on its way to the depot at South Main and Sixth Streets.

Coming out on Main Street, we stood about a while to get used to the rush and roar of traffic and to estimate the danger of the streets. We decided that it was safe enough to stay inside the city block but that neglect of traffic signals at crossings was a quick way to the mortuary. We had passed one on the way in. No doubt there were plenty of others. By-and-by we crossed a street, keeping well within the group that was crossing with us, and so had another block to explore. It is a method I recommend to folk from quiet places or just off a ship. Soon we began to puzzle out what the city was like inside. But we are not sure yet. We saw a lot of magnificent hotels and fashion stores, but more junk and

second-hand shops, and pawn shops. These incompatibles don't average up very well.

This was a one-day visit, so, with no definite object in view, we took a bus trip to Santa Monica Beach via Westlake, Wilshire, and Beverly Hills and returned by streetcar via Hollywood. Wide palm-lined boulevards, incredible hotels, beautiful homes, and a city sprawling endlessly in every direction. We shall come closer to understanding it all on a second and more leisurely visit, but first impressions are too chaotic and confused to be of any value.

On the way our streetcar was invaded by a crowd of school children, aged ten to fourteen or fifteen. Good-looking youngsters they were, brunettes mostly, very sophisticated and very noisy. If New Zealand children were as noisy on the trains as these, their parents would be more than a little upset. Many of the girls were made up like screen stars, who no doubt set the type here—cheeks rouged, lips scarlet, eyebrows plucked, and hair marcelled. Their conversation was a jumble of dates made, shows seen, and homework neglected.

We located our depot again with a sense of having achieved something and, with time to spare, thought we might eat at a cafeteria. I wanted to introduce Mrs Strachan to the way of it. We entered unobtrusively and apologetically but were at once caught up in a rush of folk who knew very well what they were after and where it was, just managed to grab a tray and some cutlery, and finished up rather breathlessly a minute or so later at a table. Then we looked to see what we had got on our trays and understood the supercilious look of the girl who checked it. An assortment of salads, one or two peaches, and a lot of superfluous cutlery!

We returned to the ship through so fishy an atmosphere that I thought we had got to Cape Cod. The trawlers were back.

The last day of our sea journey was the most pleasant—seas calm for the first time, land in sight all the way, and ships constantly passing. The worst sailors were as lively as the shellbacks. We sailed through the Golden Gate and under the bridge soon after noon, while an invisibly high aeroplane wrote an invitation to dine in letters of white smoke against the blue sky. The air at that height must have been calm, for the letters were legible for twenty minutes. It was a very clever and impressive performance. We saw nothing of the other bridge that spans the bay, for as we sailed beneath it we were in the lounge being overhauled by the immigration officers.

At Los Angeles I had received a blanket letter of introduction with the gold seal of the Carnegie Corporation of New York. This worked wonders with the immigration officer and a miracle with the baggage inspector. He would not even allow us to unlock our suitcases.



~ Letter 3 ~

SAN FRANCISCO

We have taken refuge in a hotel in Geary Street, where, except for the noise of traffic at night, we are very comfortable. I have been so busy with the schools and colleges that there has been little opportunity for sightseeing, which, so far, has been confined to Golden Gate Park, seeing the shops, a short visit to the Hotel St Francis, and one or two shows, the most significant being *Tobacco Road*, the play that has been running on Broadway, New York, for some years. This play reveals the appallingly hopeless conditions

of life among the "poor whites" in the cotton belt of Georgia. One comes out of the theatre to the pulsing streets of this vital city with a sense of shock. The contrast is too violent. Yet both are scenes from our civilization.

Seeing the shops may not sound very exciting, but actually this, especially in the evenings, is a real entertainment. The streets themselves are great coruscating canyons, where a million iridescent snakes squirm over the roaring cataracts of traffic. What a relief it is to push aside the sound-proof doors of some great emporium and pass from that shocking uproar to the quiet elegance of deep-carpeted floors. Sometimes it is not even necessary to push open the door. You walk up to it. Silently it opens, and silently it closes behind you. A photoelectric cell is your footman. And within, the treasures of a world won from raw nature by twentieth-century science are on show for your approval, and, if you care, for your use and enjoyment. It is hard to realize that this is the same science that torments the streets and sets the newspapers to their role of shrieking alarums.

But speaking of what science can do, I think we have been most impressed by what it does to free domestic life from drudgery. This is most evident in electric labour-saving devices for the homes, and in the great food markets, where the variety and hygienic setup are remarkable. Prices, too, are low, except in the clothing lines, which are probably on about our New Zealand level. Electric cookers and grills, from a dollar up; vacuum cleaners, sixteen dollars; four-tube radio sets, sixteen dollars—these are samples.

Before visiting any of the schools, I had the good fortune to meet Mr Conrad \* and Dr Hart † at Berkeley. Dr

\* Clinton C. Conrad, lecturer in education, University of California.

† Frank W. Hart, professor of education, University of California.

Hart was particularly helpful and gave me valuable introductions for my American itinerary. He seemed to know every educational movement in America and the men and women behind it. I am grateful for his help and for the delightful drive on which he took us round the hills of Berkeley. I am never happy in taking up the time of busy men, but men like Dr Hart seem to have their work so well ordered that they can afford to be hospitable to strangers.

I shall not say much about schools and colleges here till I have some standards for comparison. My time so far has been divided among the faculty of education at the University of California; the administrative department at Oakland; a commercial school, and a trade school, both in Oakland. The outstanding impression is that no one has to be sent to school or made to study when he gets there. To meet the demand of the young people for education the state has to provide more and still more facilities.

I attended the commercial school for students of eighteen and upwards who were registering after just completing a high school course. It was opening day. The capacity of the school is twelve hundred, and on that first morning they had turned two hundred away to come back again in a few days when they could find room for them. At the trade school there was the same story. This condition is partly due to the "trade recession" but is not otherwise abnormal.

This is, of course, frankly mass education with a "use" objective. The process of entering the school reminds one of the line method of assembling a motor car, or the cafeteria method of collecting a meal. There were about twenty teachers or clerks lined up behind the bench and the students were passed along the line. Early in the line were the counselors, and at the end of it placement officers. Some of

the officials were regular teachers on the staff and others were WPA officials (Works Projects Administration)—something like our placement officers. The commercial training is more subdivided and more mechanized than ours. There are special courses on the use of adding machines, and on the operation of mimeograph duplicator, ditto, and printing machines.

In the trade school, which has a roll of about seven thousand, the most popular course for girls is cosmetology, with a waiting list extending over a year. I attended one of the classes and now know the difference between permanents, marcel, and finger waves. At the same time I have regretfully discovered that the good looks of the girls here are not entirely due to birth, breeding, or the California climate—which reminds me that one of the commercial subjects is the cultivation of appearance, address, and personality.

The trade school has a very full programme which includes such things as the training of men chefs. Incidentally this department provides each day a student's lunch for fifteen cents. This is a meat loaf with chili beans, vegetables, bread and butter, and coffee or tea. There is a more elaborate lunch for students who can afford it.

In the administrative department they have a wonderful library of visual aids to education for the use of any school or class in Oakland. This includes working models, charts, lantern slides, movie films, still films, maps and globes, reproductions of works of art, and special-demonstration scientific apparatus. The collections cover every department of school life, and their use is free to all schools—elementary, high, and special—in the Oakland district. In the matter of equipment these schools are far ahead of ours, as they are in the matter of attendance. Nearly one



hundred per cent of the elementary school children go on to high school, and I have said something to show that the demand of the young people for education does not end there. Perhaps we will see why it is that, in some respects at least, the Americans are more vital and vigorous than we are.

American educators are concerned even more than we are to devise a suitable general course for students not intending to go on to college. I came across an interesting attempt of this kind in the Oakland Public Schools. I understood that it was about to be tried out with a group of Grade 12 students under the care of a specially selected group of teachers. The author of the course, which, by the way, is called a Personal Planning Course, is Dr Odell. \*

The course begins with a set of studies on How to get a job. This is followed by other units with these titles: What should I know about myself when I apply for a job? What should I know about my job? How can I get the most for my money? What can I do with my time outside of working hours? And, finally, How can I have a happy and normal family life?

The detailed studies remind us that we live in a world of money and machines. Here, for example, is part of the prescription of Unit 2: What should I know about myself? What is my personality rating? Take a health inventory. Check personal appearance. Check personal traits. Check social traits. Make a general summary of my personal status. Mental and physical fitness. Calculate my energy requirements. Discuss the relation of vitamins to my general health.

Presumably "my" refers to the student, not the instructor. The phrasing is peculiar but suggests what might

\* William R. Odell, director of instruction, Oakland Public Schools.

be called an objective egocentrism that is typical of the whole course. It must be interesting to get outside one's own skin, even outside one's own self, to conduct a factory overhaul of this kind. The instructions suggest diagnostic methods used in tuning up a motor car or in aligning a radio set. I wish I had seen the students working on this. Do they, by any chance, work two at a bench?

In Unit 3, What should I know about my job? there are some useful details: What makes one job better than another? What is my responsibility on the job? Dramatize asking for a raise. (There is surely a healthy frankness about that.)

The unit, How can I get the most for my money? should put students well on their guard against quacks and rogues and at the same time give them a sound knowledge of real values. This is the most comprehensive and, I think, perhaps the best part of the course, but I was disappointed in the unit dealing with the use of leisure because it seemed so self-centred. Even the social implications of leisure-time activities were summed up in the question, How can I get along with other people?

The unit, How can I have a happy and normal family life? deals very fully with home life, suitable dwelling and equipment, and domestic responsibility. It raises such questions as: What personal traits do I desire in my life partner? Discuss physical, social, and mental traits. Make a composite picture. Interchange lists between boys' and girls' classes. What are some of the helps to make my marriage successful? Discuss: What have I to offer? What should be my conduct in courtship? How long should my engagement be? At what age should I marry? Discuss the marriage relationship. What are the responsibilities of raising

children? Discuss and chart costs involved in raising children.

I would have found it easier to write "chickens" for "children"; and yet if this charting of costs is good in one case, why not in the other? But how can we ever attain to such a detached, objective, and unemotional point of view?

I do not think it is possible to judge such a course as this fairly except against the background of American life and recent American history. The belief in individualism is very strong in the United States. It is the citizen's first duty to support himself and not to become a charge upon the state; and in doing so he will have limitless opportunity to use his wits. If he makes money, so much the better. America respects wealth and the power that goes with it. I wish the course had encouraged more the attempt to discover an acceptable service outside, or in addition to, the better organized jobs. As it is, the student is shown only how to compete successfully with others for the jobs that are going. The national unemployment problem is left untouched.

But I like the thoroughness of the course. It is based soundly upon a survey of community life, or at least upon those aspects of community life that are relevant to the theme. The weakness of many school courses, even of the nonacademic type, is that they have too little relation to the real facts of life.

In spite of school engagements, we have managed to see a good deal of this lively city. In some ways it is too lively. On Sunday afternoon we thought it would be a good idea to get out of the noise, so with visions of our quiet Waikuku Beach at home we went out to one of San Francisco's beaches on this side of the Pacific. Unfortunately for us, half the

populace seemed to have the same idea. They had left the city, certainly, but had brought its din with them. They were disporting themselves on scenic railways, hooplas, merry-mix-ups, and dozens of other tonic devices of the whirlwind and catapult variety. Oh day of rest! Life in America must be very wearing. The people don't like to be quiet even when they are dead, else why do they have funeral parlours?

We walked home through the Golden Gate Park, and that was better. There were a few others enjoying a restful stroll, and we came across about twenty men quietly playing checkers in an open building in the Park. In the evening we went up and around the Twin Peaks, and that was better still. We were a thousand feet above the noise, and the air was free of gasoline fumes.



~ Letter 4 ~

LOS ANGELES

We are on the way again. We traveled from San Francisco back to Los Angeles by a streamliner daylight train which does the whole five-hundred-mile journey at an average speed of over fifty miles per hour, without a jerk or a bump, without dust or smoke, and almost without a sound except music from the radio. We have booked passage later by a train that we are told can do a hundred, and maintains an average of seventy-five. But I'm running ahead of my story.

Pasadena is a wealthy residential suburb of Los Angeles

and a very attractive city in itself. Our first visit was to the Institute of Technology, where we saw the great two-hundred-inch lens, really a mirror, being ground for what will be the biggest telescope in the world. The cooling of the lens after casting took nine months, the grinding will take five years, three still to go.

Next we visited Pasadena Junior College, which gives a four-year course beginning at Grade 11, that is to say, it includes two years of university work. There are, I think, about four thousand students, a third of whom will complete a degree course at the university, the others taking some terminal, that is, nonpreparatory, course.

Some features of the curriculum are of special interest to us. It is accepted that early vocational specialization is a mistake. There must be a good foundation of general education in the interests of the student and in the interests of society. General education should and does proceed throughout life. The school part in the process is to give "a general introduction to the major fields of learning." But since the time is coming when the student must be "effectively articulated," as Dr Harbeson \* says, "with the world of business and industry," some degree of vocational specialization is essential in the later years of the course.

In the compromise at which the College has arrived, the emphasis in the eleventh and twelfth grades is on a general education consisting, in the main, of survey courses in physical science (including mathematics), biological science, the humanities (literature, art, music), social studies, general orientation, and the American family (girls only.)

In general this assignment leaves about half the school time in the eleventh grade and three-fourths of it in the

\* John W. Harbeson, principal, Pasadena Junior College.

twelfth grade free for elective subjects of which there is a very wide choice.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth grades practically the whole time is given to a course selected mainly from one of four groups, viz., terminal courses in general education, with sequence courses in art, languages, social science, physical science, and biological science; terminal courses in business education; terminal courses in vocational technology; or university college-preparatory courses. There are also minor courses in home economics (girls), and physical education.

This outline does not give any idea of the ultimate detail to which these curricula are reduced. To take one example, the course in physical education offers, amongst other things, a "credential in playground leadership," which involves a minimum of four units selected from principles of community recreational games, community dramatics, community music, handicraft, and storytelling.

The organization is very elaborate, and the College is divided into faculties or departments, each with its own head, teaching staff, and clerical staffs. There is no department preparing for civil service appointments, which in the U.S.A. are made chiefly through political channels.

When a school frees itself from classical tradition and sets out to train students for the work they will do in the world, the curriculum soon reflects the complexity of life in a modern civilized community. As the school grows and more and more specialist instructors join the staff, this analysis proceeds into greater and greater detail of departmental activity. This may be good for the student who wishes intensive training in a few related studies, but his general education may suffer in the process.

Much of the confusion in the world today is due to the narrow limits of experience of the men who make up that world. Few people, even among those who rise to positions of great power and influence, can see life whole or appraise what lies outside their own specialized experience. It is little wonder that conflicts arise and that they become more and more difficult to resolve. And since our schools must accept some responsibility for this, a new and greater task has fallen to the schools that try to be realistic in their work. They must see to it that students get a broad and liberal education as well as intensive training in some selected field—and this as much to develop the personality of the student as to build a sound society. It is in the new kind of school that the difficulty is felt. The older classical or academic school does not raise the question. It is content to assume that the traditional curriculum is indeed a good general course, and unfortunately, some, if not most, of our nonclassical schools do no more to meet the difficulty than to offer, or even make compulsory, a part-time academic course with some vocational electives.

In others, as at Pasadena, the solution attempted is a preliminary survey of the whole curriculum in divisions that define the major fields of learning and that correspond with the major fields of activity in human society. Introductory courses in these fields make up the core curriculum required of all students.

I asked Dr Harbener what Pasadena was doing for adults and found that the College was well on the way to become a community college, if it is not that already. It was, I think, inevitable that a college so well equipped, staffed, and organized to meet the educational needs of young people should make an even stronger appeal to their elders. They



at least know the value of real education. Today the College is open to all who care to come. Evening classes, under the regular college instructors, offer to adults the same courses that are followed by classes during the day, and I believe that, as in the day classes, tuition is free.

We spent another full day in Pasadena with Dr Sexson,\* superintendent of education, and Miss Saxe of the research department. These good folks were most kind in giving us so much of their time. Our first visit was to a special school for subnormal children—a sad experience. The teachers confessed that the best they could do was but little. Then, as a contrast, we saw a special school for bright children and finished at a big public school, McKinley, for the great middle group.

We had an enjoyable afternoon at the Huntington Art Gallery, Library, and Museum. Here is a fine collection of Gainsborough's works, including the *Blue Boy*, several of Romney's (including the portrait of Lady Hamilton), and many by other famous artists. Huntington was a millionaire railroad king in California who collected European art treasures and bequeathed his estate and his collections to the nation. So Pasadena has a wonderful park, a library, a museum, and an art gallery.

A visit to Long Beach to see an old New Zealand colleague was followed by another to Don Wallace, W6AM, an old radio friend. From his home I had the unforgettable experience of talking on 20-metre phone to Chicago, Detroit, North Carolina, Florida, South Africa, and finally to a New Zealand boy who took a message for you, which I hope you got.

Another notable visit was to the Frank Wiggins Trade

\* John Amherst Sexson.

School at Los Angeles, where we found a good friend in the radio instructor, Mr Wersen. This gentleman took charge of us for a whole day, and through his kindness we were taken through the Fox studios at Hollywood and the Columbia radio broadcasting plant, and, in the evening, we attended a radio play being broadcast over the Columbia network.

At the Fox studios we saw the whole process of making a sound film. We watched the sound recording of a piece of the play *Kidnapped*, Warner Baxter leading, and saw a shot made of a boxing scene, with its ringside spectators in an atmosphere of artificial smoke. Then we took a tour round fake street scenes from New York to Hong Kong.

The making of a picture is not what I thought it was. A film play is not a recording of a play as seen and heard in a theatre. Generally it is shot in small bits, which may be repeated many times before an acceptable record has been obtained. These bits have to be put together afterward, and sometimes they have to be superimposed or mixed. Sound effects, for example, from half a dozen different sources may be recorded on discs and then played through together to make the sound track on the film. As a rule the sound recording machine is not in the studio at all, although, of course, the microphones are. It is in a separate soundproof room overlooking a studio, or, more often, in one of a dozen mobile trucks outside the buildings altogether. The man in the truck awaits a signal from the studio and sets his apparatus to work—probably only for half a minute. Then he awaits the next signal and may record the next bit of dialogue, or, more likely, repeat a previous bit. In cases where a disc record is being made—say of a song—the singer can immediately have it played over. If he is satisfied, good and

well; if not, he may try again. We saw Don Ameche making a record in this way. He was sitting casually in old clothes on a table in an untidy studio. Obviously he would not be seen so on the screen. Later the sound record would be played on to the film the theatre audience will see.

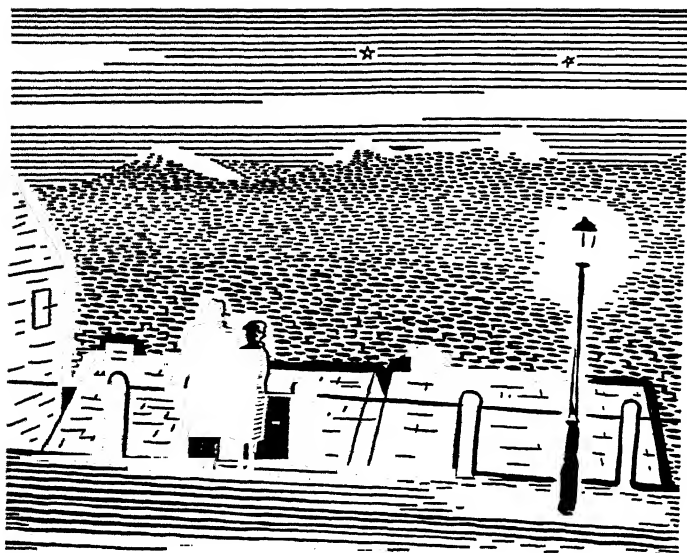
By good luck we saw a shot made. What a fake it was!—the knock-out at the end of a boxing match. The audience was hired. That is their job, to come along when called, sit here or sit there till things are ready, and, at the critical moment, get up and yell or throw their hats in the air. Probably they will do this half a dozen times before the director is satisfied. Then they go home and await a similar job, perhaps tomorrow, perhaps next week. I asked how they were paid and was told that the salary was anything from five to a hundred dollars a day, but as the work of these extras is intermittent they average less than three thousand dollars a year. They may have nothing to do for a couple of weeks but must remain within call. Well, that is one of the new jobs in this strange world of ours. We learned of some extraordinary faking in these pictures, but I must not spoil any movie fan's enjoyment. These palatial houses, that daring gallop over the rocks, that hair-raising rescue from the burning building, that glutinous screen kiss!—no, I shan't say anything.

We went off to a studio quick-lunch counter and watched Indian chiefs, cowboys, and recently rescued damsels eating three-storied hamburgers.

We had a tour through the residential districts of Beverly Hills and Hollywood, where, incidentally, we saw Harold Lloyd going home. I suppose you might call that an event. Lloyd is well thought of here. They say he is "all man." Some have not so good a reputation. Finally, we saw Holly-

wood Boulevard, but, as this street is said to assume a rather frivolous aspect at night, we did not stay.

We could well have spent more time in and about Los Angeles, especially, I think, in Pasadena, but we were only at the beginning of a long journey and had to push on. We were both suffering from lack of rest due mainly to the ceaseless clamour and rush of these great cities. Do they never sleep in Los Angeles? At night we are kept awake by the shrieking sirens of ambulance or police cars. I advise any of my friends who may follow this trail to stay, if they can, at Pasadena rather than in the big city.



~ Letter 5 ~

SALT LAKE CITY AND  
DENVER

The next stage of our journey was by the Union Pacific from Los Angeles to Denver, with a short stopover at Salt Lake City. We soon left the fertile, irrigated orchard lands of Southern California behind, penetrated a range of mountains near San Bernardino, and spent the day and most of the night in the desert, where nothing grows but yuccas, Joshua trees, manzanita scrub, and rattlesnakes. The

sun, setting blue and hot, was followed by a glowing twilight and a night of brilliant starshine. We got off at Salt Lake City at 6:30 on a typical dark winter's morning that gripped the city in a black frost. This was our first taste of winter since leaving New Zealand. We have been lucky.

We made our first excursion by the light of street lamps, walking cautiously on the slippery icebound streets and were glad, in the cheerless dawn, to find a coffee house opening for business. Then we climbed a hill to get a look over this strange city staked out in the wilderness less than a hundred years ago by Brigham Young and his fellow apostles. Today it holds over one hundred and fifty thousand people, and it doubles its population every twenty years.

As we first saw it, a cold fog lay over the city and the inland basin in which it stands. Some miles away, where the fog was thickest, spread the Great Salt Lake, and, beyond, the Wasatch Mountains, snow clad, rising twelve thousand feet. An inhospitable desert this must have been when the Mormons made their pilgrimage from Illinois. It is not desert now, for the industry of the settlers, inspired by religious zeal, has irrigated and tamed the wilderness.

Salt Lake City is the largest and most important city between the Rockies and the California coast. It is a mighty railway junction and a great air port. Every morning sky-sleepers on their way from the Atlantic to the Pacific swoop down into this basin before making their final, hazardous flight to Seattle or Oakland or Los Angeles.

From the train at night we have seen the red beacon lights that mark the transcontinental air lines winking from the hilltops, and we have been strangely thrilled and a little affrighted by these evidences of the new powers of men. It

was as if we had been suddenly launched into the disquieting world of H. G. Wells's prophecies.

Have we gone ahead too fast these hundred years since Brigham Young's ox-wagons crossed the Rockies and camped in this Mexican valley of the red men? So far as superficial habits are concerned, we human beings adjust to new conditions quickly enough. But biological evolution has been a slow process in the past. Human nature can scarcely change so rapidly as to keep pace with such vast increments of knowledge and power as a man may see in his lifetime. We are not so far, racially, from the barbarian and the brute as to be confident that great accessions of power may not be dangerous.

But, as I said before, it was a dismal day in Salt Lake City. Perhaps that coloured my thoughts.

We spent the morning in the Capitol and the afternoon in the Mormon Temple grounds. We had an enjoyable time wandering about the fine marble halls of the Capitol and especially in the basement, which houses a splendid historical and industrial museum. The methods employed in dry and irrigation farming, and the great mineral resources (in copper especially), of this state of Utah are well shown. If we had had time, we should have visited the greatest copper mine in the world, but the model in the museum served its purpose. Among the historical exhibits is Brigham Young's caravan and household furniture.

A Mormon official took us around the church grounds and buildings and made some good propaganda for his faith. I shall not discuss what I do not understand, but I have sent home a copy of the *Book of Mormon* for anyone who may be interested. I understand that nearly everyone in the state of Utah belongs to the "Church of Jesus Christ

of Latter Day Saints," the first of these saints being Joseph Smith. (I hope I have got that right.)

The Tabernacle is an extraordinary building, elliptical in form and roofed by a great dome, supported only around its edge. This gives the auditorium remarkable acoustical properties. One can indeed hear a pin drop the full length of the hall, about two hundred and fifty feet. At one end is a magnificent pipe organ and a choir with seating accommodation for five hundred. The auditorium itself seats ten thousand. We did not enter the Temple, which is open only to members of the Church. It is an imposing structure of grey granite with six spires, the highest capped by a statue to the Angel Moroni, who gave Joseph Smith his new gospel. In the grounds there is a more remarkable monument to the seagulls, which, they say, saved the early colonists from starvation by destroying a plague of grasshoppers that threatened the crops. What impressed us most, I think, was that the people of this faith have, without hypocrisy, successfully allied religion and business enterprise.

In the evening we boarded our train for Denver, which we reached during the forenoon of the next day. In Denver we definitely found something we were looking for.

In every city so far we have met with the greatest consideration from everyone, but there has always been someone who has been our special friend. I cannot say too much about the kindness of these people. No trouble was too much for them, and always they have done it all as if receiving a favour. In Denver, our guide, counselor, and friend was Dr Arnold Joyal \* of the department of education at the University of Denver. In his care we visited many fine schools, from the nursery school to the University.

\* Director, University College, University of Denver.



I must tell you about two of these, the East Denver Senior High School and the Emily Griffiths Opportunity School.

The Progressive Education Association is a new educational movement which has, with the help of the Rockefeller Foundation, promoted an experiment in thirty high schools. The centre of the movement is Columbus, Ohio, but, coming from the west, one meets it first in the East Denver High School. This is a school of nearly three thousand students. From among them a group of about two hundred and fifty have been selected to constitute a kind of school within the school. Similarly a group of progressive teachers and a director have been chosen to conduct the experiment. The students are not exceptional, but the teachers are.

The essence of the experiment is that every afternoon in the week the traditional curriculum of subjects is set aside and students devote their time to *core* studies and activities. The core studies roughly correspond with English and the social studies, but from the point of view of the Progressive Education movement these are just anything and everything that the child needs in order to grow and develop as fully and as freely as possible.

The core resembles the "organic course" at our own high school, but there are differences which are instructive. There is no definition of subjects. What is done from day to day and from semester to semester will depend upon circumstances as they appear during a period of continuous observation and consultation. There is absolute freedom. The school is assured that, whatever it does, the universities, with a few exceptions, will take its students when they complete their course. The most instructive difference is that in the relationship between the child and society, the core emphasis

is on the child's behaviour and reactions, while in our "organic course" emphasis is on the objective life of society. Both elements are in each experiment, but there is a difference of emphasis.

To give you a first impression of this experiment, I shall take you with me into 10 B's classroom, and we shall see what happens during three afternoon periods.

The bell has just rung, the class of girls and boys has assembled and there is a good deal of cheerful banter. We get only casual glances and smiles as we look for vacant seats at the back. The students might be our own except that there is no uniform and most of the girls are made up a bit. The rhythm of their speech and the modulation of their vowels are, however, a little strange to our ears. There is much business of getting papers ready.

The teacher, Mr Rice, comes in, smiles at the strangers who have appeared from nowhere, and, without taking any notice of the mild confusion of the class, strolls round, picks up a paper from one of the desks, and begins talking in an ordinary tone of voice. He makes no effort to get quietness or attention, but the clatter ceases at once. Frank, sitting beside us, passes over a paper for our edification. It appears that the class has had a library assignment. They have been a week in their new school, and one of the first things done was to find out from them what they would like to know more about. The teacher had apparently directed their attention to the library and had given them some advice about preparing a bibliography on the subjects in which they were interested. The class discussion was on correct and incorrect, defective, or misleading bibliographies. Then papers were exchanged and criticized. Finally the teacher carried the matter a stage further by defining

more obscure aspects of their subjects, and giving a fresh library assignment.

No attempt was made to take marks from the class, but the teacher gave them a hint as to who their teacher for the next period would be and what he would be discussing with them. Then he left them to their chatter.

Perhaps you will agree that it was a good plan to discover what students wanted to learn and to put them in the way of learning for themselves. There was nothing slipshod about it. They were shown exactly how a research student makes out his bibliography, even in such details as capitals, italics, and punctuation. It was obvious, too, that there was complete understanding among the teachers as to the sequence of lessons, and time was saved in this way. Each teacher prepared the class for the next teacher's lesson.

While the teacher was away, the head girl or prefect came back and asked me to tell the class where I had come from. Rather reluctantly I began to do so when the next teacher, Mr Wagner, appeared. He looked slightly startled, said, "Pardon me a moment," and went out. I have no doubt he got to a telephone quickly and asked the office if it knew anything of the queer fish that had taken possession of his class. He returned immediately, smiled, and began the lesson by saying that when they were through the visitor from New Zealand might like to speak to them. I admired his perfect self-possession, his courtesy, and, most of all, his quiet insistence that first things should come first, and first in this case meant the lesson they had gathered for.

This appeared to be criticism of a newspaper article from *The American Observer* and of an advertisement. The attentive Frank kindly passed over a copy of the paper. Cer-

tain words were picked out and their use criticized. The first point was that some words were useless because their meaning could not be determined except by a panel of lawyers. An example selected was: "The Government has no right to *control* navigable rivers." This was a legal obscurity. Other words were simply vague or ambiguous. "So-and-So has little *education*." Schooling? Intellectual ability? Knowledge? Such use of the word might lead to biased judgment. This led up to a discussion of emotional obscurities. The examples selected were *communism* and, appropriately just now, *Japanese*. Finally, an advertisement for a *strong* breakfast food was used to show that a word utterly irrelevant and therefore meaningless in its context might be deliberately employed to deceive.

I thought the whole thing a very useful lesson skilfully conducted. It is good that the children should learn from the first to protect themselves against people who are mainly concerned with selling something. Whether it was a commodity or an attitude of mind did not matter much.

At this stage the class had my little effort but I took care to be back in my seat before teacher No. 3 appeared.

She, too, smiled in a friendly way and began her lesson. I gathered that besides her teaching assignment she was the class counselor, so that she was concerned not only with all their studies but with their individual and personal attitudes and with their social life as a class group. There was no set lesson, apparently. I found later that it had been just as carefully planned as the others. She began with their *electives*, or activities they wished to pursue in addition to the core course. A play was one of these. The teacher advised that if they cared to make their own costumes they could join in such-and-such a class, in the larger school, I

think. Or, if any of the boys wished to make the stage furniture, they might do so in the woodwork classes. In the art department they might try their skill at drop scenes.

From this topic the class rambled to talk of what they thought of their new school, its architecture, for example. The teacher led them back to sources in the Georgian architecture of England and told them where they could find something about it. There was some frank criticism about the statue of an angel with a broken nose and other evidence of vandalism. Asked what they would suggest doing about it the class agreed that the angel should get a cleanup and a new nose. One proposed that a cosmetician make her up. Apparently the angel was a lady. Frank's plan for preventing such vandalism was this: "Get a write-up in the *Spotlight* (the school weekly paper) with a picture, and write under it: 'Did you do this?'"

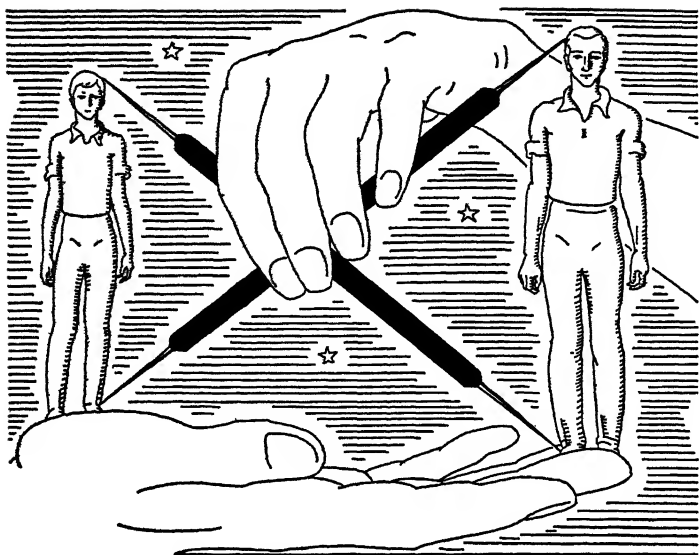
Another criticism was of the candy papers littered in the halls. The students agreed that they should put rubbish tins in the halls and encourage their use. From this point the class discussed the living conditions in the room they were to use for some time. They could probably get the loan of pictures from an art society, and anyway George Washington might be moved so as to cover up an unsightly crack in the plastered wall. They also decided to make their own notice board, and the design was carefully discussed. The brightest suggestion was to paint some murals on the blank walls. These, by the way, are very popular in American schools.

Well now, there's the afternoon's core course. What do you think of it?

Now one or two things I have discovered. Children taking the core course do so after consent obtained from par-

ents in the Parent Teacher Association. The fact that it is an experiment is frankly explained to parents—and, of course, the objects in view. Parents who are doubtful are advised not to use the core course. Besides the core course, which occupies about half the school time, students take any electives they can fit in. These classes are in certain rooms at certain times. They can join anything they like. All the usual subjects of a technical or an academic high school are electives so far as the core groups are concerned.

The Emily Griffiths Opportunity School commemorates the founder, an elementary school teacher who had the wit to diagnose a social evil and the courage to act upon her inspiration. Emily Griffiths found that the backwardness of many of her scholars was due to unhappy life in a home where the father, perhaps, was irregularly employed or unskilled and unwanted in industry and the mother querulous and unhappy in her attempts to make ends meet. "If only there was a school," thought Emily Griffiths, "where anyone might go at any time to be taught anything and no questions asked, what a boon it would be to such people." With difficulty she persuaded the authorities to try out the idea. And here in Denver is the school, working day and night to help ten or eleven thousand people every year to get out of the "Slough of Despond." I met the principal, Dr Paul L. Essert, a keen man and a wonderful organizer. He gave me an hour and a half in a busy day. I wish he had spent more of the time telling me of his work rather than asking me about mine, but I learned enough to see that the Opportunity School was an inspired work and an effectual social force for the betterment of the community.



~ Letter 6 ~

## THE NORTH SHORE

The streamliner *City of Denver* "sails" over one thousand miles overnight between Denver and Chicago. Travel by air is a little faster, but not much. In places the train moves at one hundred and ten miles per hour, but there is no sense of excessive or dangerous speed. The locomotive is quite unlike the usual steam engine with its boiler and smoke stack belching smoke and steam with fussy fury. It is rather like the engine room of a modern motor liner. The first two cars of the long, yellow, slithering snake con-

tain a series of Diesel engines direct-coupled to dynamo generators. Electric power is conveyed from these to motors on the driving wheels in much the same way as in our street-cars. The control room is a kind of cockpit high up in the snout of the snake.

One misses the familiar puffing of the steam train and the clackety-clack of the rails. Instead there is a high-pitched humming noise from the engine, while the staccato succession of rail joints is so rapid as to merge into a continuous whirr that seems to belong to the passing landscape rather than to the train. Discomfort? Not the least, except the mental unrest of a too active imagination picturing all the possible alternatives to a clear passage.

At Chicago in the early morning I put a call through to Dr Lawler \* at Northwestern University. He advised me to take a room at the Homestead Hotel in Evanston, a suburban city of Greater Chicago, eighteen miles north by electric or by steam railway. Here we were very quiet and comfortable. We had peaceful nights for the first time since reaching America, but the hospitable plans of Dr Lawler and Mr Geppert of Denoyer-Geppert, gave me my busiest days. I saw many schools and colleges of all grades, all but one—Lane Technical—in the North Shore region of Greater Chicago, attended an education faculty seminar, addressed a group of teachers at Northwestern University, spent a morning in the Planetarium and visited two radio amateurs, W9KJ and W9VDD at Oak Park.

From the educational point of view this visit to Chicago, of which I had hoped but little, turned out to be very profitable. The high lights were the educational experiment conducted by the Northwestern University's educational fac-

\* Eugene S. Lawler, associate professor of education.



ulty at the Evanston High School, and the activity school at Highcrest Elementary.

The Evanston High School experiment is much like the Progressive Education movement at East Denver, with the advantage of continuous observation and research by the university faculty. The pamphlet on the project makes the general idea so plain that I need do no more than give my own impressions.

As in the Progressive Education Association's experiment at Denver and elsewhere, I think that the general plan is sound. It is an attempt to find an educational answer to the threat of social disintegration and individual frustration which many people believe is implied in the present phase of democratic Western civilization. But, like many other experiments, it has its dangers. The teachers must be very well qualified to do their work. Routine education of the traditional type is safer for the mediocre teacher. The apparent freedom of the new education opens the way to superficiality and discursiveness, which may, in the end, accomplish nothing.

The "interest-activity" motive, without some direction or guidance, may easily slip into mere flippancy. The average child, perhaps no less than the average adult, is very pleased to be entertained from moment to moment. And so I think that consistent effort may be difficult unless the teacher is clear about the purpose of it all and unless he can hold his classes from wobbling too far from the line. We know that in our own school, and I think we have done well to assume that there is an objective form in human society clear enough to suggest a corresponding form for our *organic* course. If we have erred there, I think we have erred on the safe side.

It may be that conclusions drawn from the experiment may not be generally applicable. The selected group of students is not likely to be an average group since it will hardly show a normal proportion of average children. Children come into it with the consent of their parents. The average parent is not disposed to take risks, especially economic risks, in the education of his children. A very intelligent parent may, and so may a parent whose child has proved difficult at school. The children are therefore likely to belong to exceptional groups, although a group intelligence test may not reveal this.

I think, however, that this is a valuable experiment of especial interest to New Zealand schools. It should encourage us to know that there is in America a high school of good repute that derives its general course of studies from a community survey, that this is the deliberate plan of the faculty of education in one of America's finest universities, and that many parents have consented to have their children take the risk of such an experiment.

That there is a risk will be claimed by most people. And yet why should there be? If schooling is a preparation for life, surely the obvious starting point is to discover what life is, and how can that be done better than by studying the way of life in civilized communities, beginning, of course, with one's own? The risk, if there is any, is that such a process of discovery may prove to be too slow and also too limited in scope. There is a time limit for schooling, and many people will prefer the orthodox method of acquiring set knowledge in traditional lumps, which, with luck, can be disgorged for examination. I think that those promoting the plan would say that the slowness of the discovery method is more than offset by the significance of the knowl-

edge acquired, by the greater educational value of the method of acquiring it, and by the genuine interests aroused. So far as scope is concerned, I think they would say that there need be no limit. Community life in Evanston is not isolated in time or in space. The study of the local community must lead to consideration of its origins, its problems, its conditions, and its relationships, and these, in the end, will prove to be as wide as the world. All human knowledge and all human activity have some bearing upon the life of a modern civilized community. To those who are mindful that education has to do with the development of individual personality and character, those who are sponsoring the experiment would, I think, reply that personality and character develop best (if not only) in social relationships and that the first thing to do is to establish such relationships.

The Evanston experiment will be watched keenly and, I believe, sympathetically by all who are trying to discover the best adjustment of the secondary school to modern conditions of life.

The Highcrest Elementary School is interesting, especially in the kindergarten and the lower grades. This is what is called an activity school. Children take routine studies in, say, writing, reading, and numbers only when their interest in things they want to do impels them to take them. We are familiar with the idea in part at least—as when, for example, a boy's hobby interest in radio or aeroplanes sets him to studying electronics or aerodynamics. But I was impressed by the apparent success of the idea in the general plan of the school.

Here, even the youngest children were playing at living. "What shall we do today?" begins the daily schedule.

“Well, it’s Valentine Day. We’ll make our valentines and mail them to our friends. We’ll have a party. We’ll send out invitations. We’ll prepare the valentine cakes, and at the party we’ll read our valentines and then we’ll have a play. Afterwards we’ll write about it for our journal and then we’ll print the journal.”

I found the youngest children in the midst of some such programme. The work had been divided up, and certainly everyone was busy. They wrote and mailed letters to each other, called each other up on the telephone, designed valentine cards, baked the cakes, published their journal, and so on. I noticed that they were critical of each other’s spelling and that they asked teacher’s help in adding their household accounts. It is a bold experiment, very promising in capable hands, but with some danger of too much discursiveness, if teachers are not unusually good.

The New Trier High School, at Winnetka, is a remarkably well-equipped school in a better class residential district. Expense seems to be no object. The annual cost to the community is about two hundred and eighty dollars per pupil. Exceptional results should be looked for in such a regime. The school is trying to express a philosophy of education appropriate to the conditions of modern civilization. That is a familiar slogan, as is also the objective of *Citizenship and Democratic Living*.

I learned that in June, 1937, a faculty committee set up six months before had prepared a preliminary report in which it was stated that most of the teachers believed that the chief function of the school was to educate the children for citizenship in a democracy. They had agreed, too, “that democracy was endangered by weaknesses developing within it, being unable to function more successfully than the

moral, intellectual, and civic integrity of its citizens enabled it to do; that therefore, education was the true foundation of democracy, and that education for citizenship became a major objective of schools; and that education with this objective involved: (a) instruction in the principles, institutions and processes of democracy, (b) through the inculcation of democratic ideals and the development of proper attitudes, (c) by providing well directed activities affording opportunity for the application of these ideals and attitudes."

I notice that the committee took for granted that the maintenance of the democratic state was desirable before it proceeded to define democracy in general or to discover the characteristics of the American democratic state. The report, however, goes on to suggest the "almost axiomatic" principles involved in the conception of democracy: "the largest measure of individual freedom consistent with the general good; freedom of speech and opinion; equality of political rights; the obligation of the individual to meet to the best of his ability all the responsibilities that citizenship in a democracy entails; representative government set up by and amenable to the will of the people; an unceasing effort in the direction of social betterment; a constant endeavor to raise the cultural level of the people through education."

At this point the committee perhaps felt that many of these "principles" were even broader than the general term "democracy" and had to be further analyzed and defined. The fourth, for example, was vague and might be said to involve the whole question. Seven or eight personal characteristics of good citizens are suggested. It is doubtful, too, whether the last two "principles" are specially characteristic

of states that call themselves democracies, and whether the effort towards social betterment, if undertaken by the state, might not, in certain circumstances, be challenged as something "contrary to the spirit of the Constitution." I am thinking of such enterprizes as state housing, for example, and the operations of the Tennessee Valley Authority. I think the committee might have been more successful in its preliminary analysis if it had not attempted to define at the same time democracy as an ideal and democracy as exemplified in the American way of life.

The report indicates what machinery, adapted to the purpose in view, is already in the school. There are certain instructional courses quite suitable. Others, such as English and arts, provide incidental opportunities and may be better adapted to the purpose. But the crux of the problem is "to provide in the school opportunity for boys and girls to live democratically." That, it was felt, was the "point at which the system of education for citizenship was least effective." There were, of course, a number of student activities such as the school council, athletic teams, and boys' and girls' clubs, that were more or less democratic, but these covered only a small part of the life of the school. The committee was not prepared, however, to suggest that the government of the school should be turned over to the pupils. In matters of conduct obedience to law was essential. Children were not born with a knowledge of social obligations and the will to meet them. That fact, however, was not sufficient reason for enforcing unquestioning obedience to laws promulgated by the faculty. Something more might be done to educate the children to an understanding and willing acceptance of the laws.

To this end the committee suggested that there be set

up in the school institutions like those in the state—police, courts, and judiciary. This, it was pointed out, “would require careful planning and watchful supervision. . . . Certain things must be clearly understood: first, that the aim is purely educational—that we are trying to meet the obligation of the school to teach boys and girls how they will be expected to live when they assume their places as full citizens in a democratic state; second, that the community has invested the School Board, the Administration and the Faculty with certain duties and responsibilities which they can neither resign nor delegate to the students; third that because of the immaturity and inexperience of boys and girls these agencies stand ready to exercise full authority and control when, in their judgment, circumstances require it.”

This is only a preliminary report, but surely the committee was a little timid. One can understand reluctance to take risks with the curriculum of a school so well organized to prepare students for college entrance, but it is not so easy to explain the lack of faith in the good sense of the students. One could wish at least that the modest changes suggested by the committee had not been tagged with the precaution that they were “purely for educational purposes” and presumably not to be taken too seriously. Perhaps that is what is the matter with our idea of the role of education.

I was greatly struck by the fine equipment of New Trier and, I confess, envious too, especially about such things as their auditorium, their wonderful swimming pool, their luxurious home crafts department, their libraries, and their teaching equipment. This school and others I have seen are doing fine work in the arts department, which is properly integrated with the curriculum as a whole. The murals are remarkable. New Trier is directed by earnest men and

women, including the principal, and those who should be in a position to judge speak highly of the results.

Lane Technical High School for boys is very big. So was Megalosaurus. It has eleven thousand students, two hundred and seventy-five teachers, three miles of corridors, and so on and so on. The feeding of the multitude in the cafeteria is a remarkable sight—likewise the traffic control. I could not get out of my mind the familiar picture of drafting sheep on a big New Zealand stock farm.

Other impressive things are the number of well-equipped machine shops and the arrangements for such courses as Automobile Driving with machines that record blunders and an outdoor track complete with cross streets and traffic signals. The commercial art department, too, is businesslike and efficient. The whole thing expresses the character of modern industrial civilization—mass-production methods applied through powered machines to attain commercial profits. But as for education in the liberal sense of the word, I cannot imagine it in such conditions.

I saw another and more intensive example of the same type of school at the Ford factory in Detroit. Here the school is in its true setting and is precisely an annex to the remarkable line-assembly plant that turns out a car in every four minutes by the clock. "One man, one job," if it's only tightening a nut on a passing engine block. The real brains are already mechanized, and the tiny fragment of intelligence still contributed by the attendant will doubtless soon be mechanized also. To ensure machine efficiency meantime that fragment of intelligence has to be trained and speeded up in the school. May God have mercy upon us!





~ Letter 7 ~

## CHICAGO AND DETROIT

Before leaving Chicago I made other interesting visits. At Willard Elementary School I saw the best kindergarten so far, and that means a lot. I am sure James Barrie designed the schoolroom and that Peter Pan was hiding behind the screen. Believe it or not, there were live grey rabbits in the class, and the fish in the aquarium joined in the fun.

As my visit was short, I asked to see the beginning and the end of the process. The kindergarten satisfied all my hopes,

but the highest grade class did not. My hurried impression was probably wrong, but I felt that the experiment had gone a bit astray. I believe that the temporary absence of the principal and, more especially, a recent change of teachers were responsible for whatever may have been true of my impression. I am sure that what I saw lower down, if consistently followed up, could not but give good results.

Haven High School was next on the list: another fine school, fortunate in equipment that includes a splendid library and murals of outstanding merit. One mural expresses a theme capable of infinite variation—a grouping of the child-loved folk of the nursery rhymes and fairy tales—Old Mother Hubbard, Little Miss Muffet, Mother Goose, Red Riding Hood, and the rest, all meeting on the friendliest terms, as they do in the mind of a child. Another mural, more impressive in a less homely way, gave rhythmic expression to the drama of modern American life.

A visit to a famous school, Skokie, at Winnetka (Grades 1-8), ended an all-too-short experience of the North Shore cities. I hope some New Zealand teacher will follow me and stay longer at Evanston. If he has the good fortune to interest Dr Lawler, all will be well.

Another wonderful host in Chicago was Mr Geppert of the Denoyer-Geppert Company, which has supplied us with the fine historical maps and biological charts we have in the school. After an interesting morning spent in seeing how biological apparatus and maps were made, we made for the famous Chicago Planetarium.

A Planetarium is a great circular auditorium with a dome-shaped ceiling. As nearly as possible the whole thing is an inverted hemispherical bowl. At its exact mathematical centre there is a remarkable projector with a complex sys-

tem of lenses that can cover the whole surface of the dome with a moving panorama of the stars.

Suppose you try, in imagination, to keep us company as we take our seats in the audience. Gradually the light fades, and we are magically transported to an open hillside on the outskirts of a great city whose buildings are dimly silhouetted against a still-glowing horizon. It is a beautiful, cloudless, starlit night. The illusion is so perfect that one almost feels the chill of night. We hear the voice of the lecturer telling us that this is the sky as it might be seen in Chicago at nine o'clock tonight. The stars and constellations are named and indicated by a luminous arrow that appears, cometlike, in the heavens.

"And now," says the lecturer, "we shall move the sky on to midnight. See how Cassiopeia's Chair moves round the polestar. In the southern hemisphere there is no bright polestar to mark the centre of rotation. Perhaps you would like to see the southern sky with its famous Cross. Wait, we shall take a ship and sail south to the latitude of Sydney, ten days' journey. But we shall hurry up the days and the nights."

And at once we have the illusion of a rapid succession of days and nights as if we had come into possession of Wells's Time Machine. The stars wheel; the sun rises, flashes across the sky, and sets. Another night of stars is heralded by a new moon in the west. Each succeeding day and night shows a shifting of the sun and the stars to the north and a waxing of the moon, until soon we begin to see our familiar New Zealand sky.

So the lecture proceeds. What a miracle! Why have we not a planetarium in New Zealand? The lecturer tells us how the stars are located by lines of right ascension and declination visible only to the astronomer. He makes them vis-

ible to us on his amazing sky, and then, to complete the wonder, takes us on his Time Machine through a scurry of centuries to the year 5000 A. D. when the procession of the equinoxes shall have shifted the sky to move round another polestar.

The lights go up. Rather dazed and silent, we leave the theatre, and it is some minutes before the roar of the great city beating on our ears like the sound of surf in an angry sea brings us back to ourselves, and to this city of Chicago, and to the year of Our Lord 1938.

Now something about the Ford factory at Detroit. In my last letter I gave it scanty attention, because, to tell the truth, it seemed so inhuman. Still, the actual process of line assembly is amazing enough. As one way to describe it we might say that a lump of crude iron ore is dumped into a furnace at eight o'clock on Monday morning, and leaves the assembly line at noon on Tuesday as part of a complete V8 moving under its own power. Another car leaves four minutes later, and so on for six days in the week throughout the year. Other crude material is simultaneously fed in to some other part of the factory—say lime and sand, to make glass—and follows its own route, which, in due time, converges into the main line when the finished part has to be put into its proper place. Every nut, bolt, screw, lug, or fitment, big or little, performs a similar peregrination down its own devious runway till all the streams converge at last on the final assembly line.

Along all the lines or, if you like, on the banks of all the confluent streams that make up the great river system, thousands of humans wait to make some little adjustment, pull a lever to set a drilling machine to work, tighten a nut, or test a measurement, do the little job that has not yet been fully

mechanized. But for the most part the whole thing is automatic, weirdly and impressively automatic. The brains of the factory are already built into the machines, and the men themselves, unsmiling, without haste, indifferent, their minds protectively dulled to numbness by the stupefying rhythm, do their little parts. Every morning they check in, every evening check out, if they are on the day shift. At mealtimes their lunch is brought to them on the job. At the week end they collect their wages and, presumably, for a little spell, move, think, and feel as sentient human beings, a right of self-expression denied to them on the job.

Just now, each week, some of them are being laid off, and the cause is significant, much more significant than I have yet been able fully to appreciate. But this is the way of it. The stream of cars in the factory assembly line that is so like a river with its tributary streams, is being backed up. It does not flow into a limitless ocean. It breaks up again into distributaries. In the factory yard great lorries wait to pick up four cars each and begin streaming over the roads north, south, east, and west, to the selling agents, who have to place these cars in a market against the back pressure of twenty-four million cars already on the roads. This back pressure is due to the fact that eighty per cent of the purchasers of new cars already own cars which they have to trade in. These trade-in cars, renovated and refurbished, have in turn to be sold against a back pressure of cars of still lower grade, until the process finally ends in the wrecker's junk heap.

Now the whole system is being clogged up. Junk heaps disfigure the landscape. Dealers' yards in every city are jammed full of second- and third-hand cars. The back pressure is overcoming the intensive selling pressure and dam-

ming the stream of industry through the distributaries, the factory assembly line, and ultimately, the great iron and steel works, and the mines. The effect is felt in the lowered tone of the Wall Street stock market and in the growing numbers of unemployed, now something over ten million. An increasing proportion of these are over forty, which means, in America, that they are probably out for keeps. That is one element, and a big one, in what Roosevelt is calling the trade recession.

You can imagine how helpless the average workman feels in the face of such colossal and insensate forces. There is some excuse for his joining up with other workmen in the organized labour movements that promise some relief but are engaged in activities that are keeping the police forces wide awake. This morning, on my way to Columbia University, I saw seven policemen keeping guard over a store before which half a dozen sandwich men paraded with strike propaganda on their backs.

Since coming to America I have had growing evidence of a strange element of fear that seems to invade every quarter of American life, from the Senate at Washington down to the man who sells "hot dogs." Sometimes the fear gets into the newspaper headlines, but then, generally, it is named "Hitler" or "Japan" or "Communism." I am coming to believe that it is none of these but rather just a nameless fear of a breakdown of the American way of life. Even in the conferences \* it was the dominant motif—the threat to American democracy which must be met by a new education. This explains, I think, what was a little puzzling to us in the speeches of American educators in the recent conference in New Zealand. I am beginning to understand that now.

\* The educational conferences described in Letter 9.

I saw America in 1927, an America intoxicated by success and boundlessly confident of the future. But this is a new America. There has been a bad jolt, and now comes another. There is no longer the old assurance. America, headed by American business, is on the defensive. The success, or apparent success, of any other political philosophy is seen as a threat.

But surely there is a middle way between complete regimentation and that *laissez faire* which permits a few to make unlimited profit while it keeps most precariously close to the bread line. What freedom have these factory workers got? I cannot see why some measure of public control of key industries should not march with greater freedom for the many, if not for the exceptional few who come to the top in a free-for-all scramble for the big prizes.

But enough of this just now. Do you remember Charlie Chaplin in the assembly line?

I mentioned in my last letter that I had visited the Ford school in Detroit, and you would guess from what I said that I did not altogether like it. I feel now that I was not quite fair. I had, I confess, an idea that such schools were designed with much the same objectives as the Ford factories with which they are associated. In the efficient working of the factory there are many elements—high-grade materials, precision tools, and line assembly organization. The human workers were, it would seem, a more uncertain element. It was desirable that they acquire the same perfection, some of the qualities, for example, of precision tools. Hence the trade-school annex to the factory. That, I think, was about my mental attitude when I walked in at the door of the trade school.

I came out in a few hours without any fundamental change of mind but, at the same time, with a willingness to admit that there was much good in the system which I had not until then fully appraised. I believe now that such schools have a definite contribution to make towards the solution of our educational problems, and, indeed, that they indicate a danger into which the benevolent idealism of our school philosophy may cause us to stumble, if we are not careful.

There is no nonsense about Ford schools. They face up to certain facts about life as it is. They know what they are after, and they reach their objective by the direct route, gathering no primroses by the way. At the basis of all civilized society is a *working* association of man with nature. The ease with which we get so many things today is apt to make us forget that without work none of these things can be had. We have invented machines and have learned to control great reserves of energy in nature, but such progress has not done away with the need for work, though it has changed the nature of that work. That is one fact the Ford schools face up to. So they train workers for the skills and accuracies and responsibilities called for in a machine age.

There is little theorizing in the school philosophy, but one article of faith is obvious. It is a good thing for a boy that he should be able to work with hand and brain. The schools of the nation turn out too many "educated" opportunists, who may, if they have the luck, support themselves in clerical, commercial, or social services, but who otherwise are quite likely to swell the ranks of the predatory and commensal classes. Many cases of juvenile delinquency and crime may be traced to the fact that boys were not taken in



hand and taught some useful trade. Besides, most boys like to make things. They should be given more opportunity to express their aptitudes in this useful way.

The main difference between the Ford schools and technological schools in general is the close association with the factory. This links education with genuine productive work and allows a boy to support himself while he is at school.

There are three types of Ford school: the trade school, the apprentice school, and the training school. The first is for boys from twelve to eighteen years of age who wish to train for work in the Ford factory or elsewhere; the second is for employees and apprentices outside their working hours; and the third gives a short course of technical training for high school graduates.

The Ford Trade School was founded in 1916 as a non-profit private school on the property of the Ford Company. Boys are enrolled between the ages of twelve and fifteen. For the first six months after the opening of the School there were one thousand applicants for admission each week—some evidence that the School was needed. The actual enrollment is about one thousand eight hundred. When the boys graduate at eighteen or nineteen, they are offered positions with the Ford Motor Company, but they are not obliged to accept these. In the training period, shop work and class alternate, two weeks in the shop to one week in the classroom. The school year consists of thirty-four weeks of shop work, fourteen weeks of class work, and four weeks of vacation. For the whole time the student worker is paid, the rate rising from twenty-five cents an hour on enrollment to about sixty cents an hour while still attending classes. When he spends all his time in shop work his wages may rise to eighty cents an hour. In addition each boy is

given a bonus of two dollars each month which he must deposit in some bank until he is through his course. He is also given a hot lunch daily.

The work done in the shops is useful work, such as the repair and the manufacture of tools and appliances used in the factory, but not work to be sold as part of a Ford car. This service almost pays the whole cost of the school. At first the student's shop work is the repairing and salvaging of tools such as wrenches, hammers, and screw drivers. Later the student makes drills, reamers, and other special tools. Experienced students work on precision instruments like micrometers and dial indicators. Before graduating, each boy has spent at least three months on the shaper, four months on the lathe, five months on milling machines, and five months on grinding machines. It is claimed that such training develops habits of orderliness, accuracy, and a sense of responsibility and that for most boys it is more valuable than an attempt to develop originality, adaptiveness, and initiative.

Classroom training is in close touch with shop work. Very practical courses in mathematics, mechanics, physics, chemical analysis, metallography, shop practice, and mechanical drawing are followed. There are courses in civics, economics, and commercial English, all with a very practical outlook. The staff has prepared its own textbooks, the usual academic texts being considered to be too discursive and unrealistic—a criticism with which I have a good deal of sympathy.

It is easy to find fault with a system of training that treats human beings as mere users of tools and machine tenders to the apparent neglect of all other considerations, but such schools as this do give a valuable service. Certainly the whole boy does not go to school, but boys who otherwise

would remain uneducated and unskilled are at least given a chance to support themselves and not become a burden on the state. At the same time they are developing personal characteristics—such as the will to work, careful attention to detail, the ability to analyze a mechanical job, and appreciation of purposefulness and of the direct approach to a task—which are valuable enough despite their limitations. Then, too, the Ford schools, by paying wages and making the boys' positions secure, make it possible for some to get a liberal education. I was interested to find that over ten per cent of the boys were taking supplementary courses in night schools, and it is much to the credit of the school that preference in admission is given to applicants from poorer homes or such as have to support a widowed mother.

From Detroit we took a route east through Canada in the hope of seeing something of Niagara Falls. It was so foggy we could not see through the windows. From the platform of the carriage we got occasional glimpses of the river. The great ice-jam had broken up and was piled along the banks. Just for a few minutes we saw the wreckage of the great bridge, and that was all. The weather showed no signs of clearing, so we thought we would push on through Buffalo to Rochester.



~ Letter 8 ~

ROCHESTER

Our visit to Rochester, New York, gave us one of the most pleasant interludes in our journey. It was the week end, New York City was close ahead, and we were tired of traveling. In Rochester, I hoped, an old friend still lived. He might be glad to see us. So we got off the train.

We found a suitable hotel, and I called my friend on the phone. In a few minutes he came along with his car, and that ended the idea of staying at a hotel. We were not sorry to see the inside of a home again, and—well, you

must travel a bit, stopping at hotels and boarding houses, in order to feel what it is like to be accepted as a guest in a family. The last time I saw my host was in 1927, when he still lived with his parents. Now there was a wife and Linda, a bonnie eighteen-month-old miniature of her mother who could say "scissors" with plenty of sizz. Also there was a cozy new American home on the hills near the city.

I must try to tell you something about this American home. I don't know whether it is the typical home of a young American family of moderate means, but if it is, then any suggestion that American home life is breaking down is sheer nonsense. Here is something planned as a home, and not merely as a dormitory and occasional eating place for a group of people whom circumstances compel to meet for breakfast but who prefer to live elsewhere.

I am not a good observer of domestic arrangements, but I could see as well as feel that the living room, occupying almost the whole ground floor, was the essential feature of the house and that for the sufficient reason that the social life of the family and of its intimate friends was what the place stood for. All other features of the house were structurally related to the living room. The dining room and kitchenette were a ground-floor annex to this room, and the stairway to bedrooms and bathroom above led from it. There was nowhere a passage or corridor to break the unity of design.

The whole house was comfortably warmed by a thermostat-controlled oil furnace in the basement that needed only occasional attention, but, in the severity of the continental winter, a log fire in the living room lent additional cheer and comfort. There was nothing stiff or formal about the arrangement of the room, which had been

planned in simple good taste and with an eye to comfort and intimate sociability.

To this room each evening of our stay a few friends would come. There would be music perhaps, or a home movie entertainment. An excellent radio set was used with taste and discretion. But the real feature of all these gatherings was conversation—an art not altogether lost when conditions are genial. I shall long remember these chats and the plans we made in the glow of firelight, with all the world outside locked in the white grip of a winter's night.

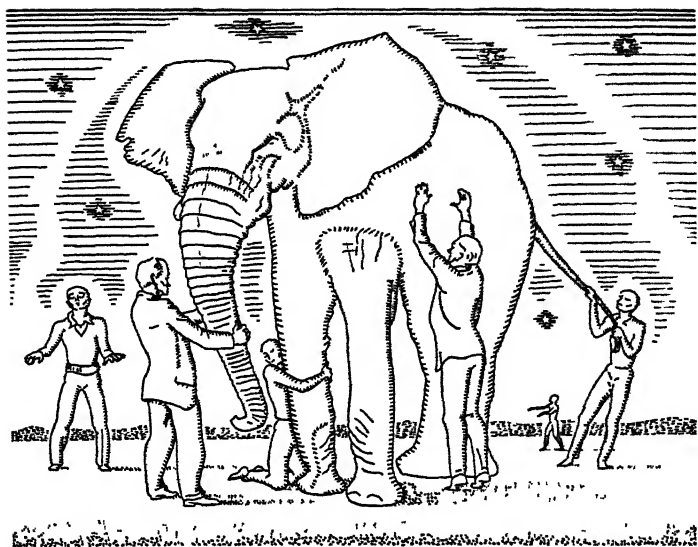
But I must not forget that a home cannot be run on conversation. There are such things as meals to be prepared and tables set, and even dishes to be washed. And so science and technical skill were harnessed to reduce work and free the housewife to take her full part in the social life in the home. Electricity is a good and clean worker, and, under supervision, a good cook. So there was many a cunning electrical device in the kitchen. That, too, is civilization, solving the domestic servant problem with all its troublesome social relationships. There did not seem to be a washing Monday either. Soiled linen was sent to an electrified community laundry. But if I go any further with this description, I shall be sure to blunder. Perhaps I have done so already. I must add, however, that I have not forgotten that there was a baby girl and that she did not have an electric nurse.

While in Rochester we visited the showrooms of the Eastman Kodak Company and made a study of the 16-mm. educational films. We learned, too, something of a new process of colour photography which is engaging the attention of the research staff.

And I am likely to remember that I was interviewed before the microphone by the superintendent of education.

This was a new and rather trying experience for me, but I believe it is more effective than a talk. Afterwards I was shocked to hear the whole thing over again—as you may also, by the way, for a recording has been made for me to take away.

Well, so we shall leave Rochester of pleasant memory and make for the great roaring metropolis of New York. I wonder whether it has changed much since I saw it in 1927.



~ Letter 9 ~

## TWO EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCES

The pleasant interlude at Rochester left me better prepared for a strenuous week in New York. This began with an interesting supper meeting at the home of Dr Rugg \* at 600 West End Avenue. It was a gathering of people with an international reputation, James Macdonald, of the *New York Times*, Dr James T. Shotwell, a world authority on

\* Harold Rugg, professor of education, Teachers College, Columbia.



international affairs, and others in whose high company I had never hoped to be. Dr Chang, of Nankai University, who had recently been traveling with a group of diplomats through the capital cities of Europe, spoke to us for an hour upon his views of the international situation.

When a Chinese philosopher speaks, one feels that the wisdom of an age-old culture illumines his mind. Dr Chang gave us an impression of how the ephemeral quarrels of the young nations of Europe look when seen against the background of human history. None but a scion of the oldest and most enduring civilized nation could have told us what he did. China had experienced such transitory disturbances many times in history. From her ageless book of wisdom Dr Chang offered some advice. There are two diplomacies, he said, centrifugal and centripetal. China has learned that when internal troubles develop it is best to attend to peripheral problems. It is at those points that the nation is growing. There is a biological significance in such centrifugal diplomacy. Britain would do better to cultivate her outer dominions than to concern herself overmuch with the disturbances in Europe. Meantime, while Britain's obsession lasts, the role of leadership awaits America. The right moment would be marked not by anything that Hitler or Mussolini did, but by the failure of Japan.\*

I have given the gist of Dr Chang's remarks as well as I can remember them. I am still thinking about them.

The chief event of the New York week was the Conference of the Progressive Educational Association. The P.E.A. movement, so far as I was able to judge, has aims similar to those of the New Education Fellowship, and in regard

\* This prediction, like many others made in 1938, seems a little more than optimistic in the light of recent events.

to membership, the P.E.A. is the American branch of the world-wide N.E.F. Both institutions are trying to find the educational implications of the changing social conditions typical of our age.

The child growing up today has experiences that are far more disturbing than they have ever been before. It is much harder for him to realize a full and harmonious development of his own life, and at the same time more seems to depend upon what attitude he takes towards social responsibilities and relationships. It is imperative that schools overhaul their philosophy and practice so that they may give better service. To do this they must have a better appreciation of the social responsibility of education and a better understanding of the nature of the child. In both the P.E.A. and the N.E.F. these two elements are prominent.

This was my first acquaintance with an educational conference in America. I am sure it must have been a valuable experience to its members. I wish I could say the same for the humble visitor from "down under," but to be perfectly truthful, the thing was altogether too big and too complex for me. I might have done more had I been better prepared, as, for example, by a week's preliminary study of the programme and an hour or two to make a route map of the Hotel Pennsylvania, which is about as big as a reputable township in New Zealand. As it was, I spent a good deal of time locating meetings, which by the time of my fortuitous appearances were usually crowded to the doors. I know that this was entirely my own fault. I am afraid, however, that any comments I make on the conference must seem as casual and irrelevant as my occasional appearances during a hectic week in the foyers, elevators, and corridors of the Pennsylvania.

I have studied the programme closely since the conference and have concluded that, by being right on the job every day and wasting no time, I might have got a nodding acquaintance with about one-fifth of the educational problems dealt with at the conference. Teaching a class of boys seems to be altogether too big a job for anyone, and bigger after every conference. To justify my possible return to the job I have tried to convince myself that this conference has fallen into the same predicament as education in general.

We specialize too much, and we analyze too much, and that, in the end, unless it leads to a new synthesis, means loss of all form and feature. I think we have got to a point where we must simplify in education as in life. In our anxiety to prepare for everything that may happen to any of our children while they live in this changing world (and perhaps in the next), we are losing sight of essentials. We come to our job of teaching somewhat in this mood; Here we have  $n$  children each with  $p$  variable characteristics entering into  $m$  relationships with a world that presents  $x$  changing situations. As a result we are faced with

$$n \int \frac{dp}{dt} \cdot m \int \frac{dx}{dt}$$

contingencies, for each of which we must find a set of educational precepts. (I apologize for the mathematics. I am trying to show how absurd such a task may become.) Surely we have done enough analyzing to try now to simplify, and surely that is possible.

Seen close up and in detail, the activities of the individuals and groups that make up a city's population may seem casual and unrelated and such organization as there is, very

complex. The life of a rural village, by contrast, may appear too simple, but at least that gives a clue which, followed up, will show that the life of the individual and the life of society are organic and the relations between them organic also. Throughout all the changing phases of history the springs of life have remained relatively simple and unchanged—solar energy, human virtue; an earthborn element and a heavenborn element. The things men live for do not vary much from individual to individual, from group to group, or in time and place: security, fulfillment—to be safe, to be somebody. Nor is there much that is casual in the changing world. It is essentially organic growth with historical derivatives.

I know that I may be charged with being too simple and naive, but I still believe that a credible form of community life can be presented, no matter how complex it may seem. There is, for example, constant enquiry into the ways of nature in the attempt to control and use natural energies and resources. That enquiry lies at the root of the organic structure of society. And since we are more than intelligent animals, we are not content unless we can make living an art as well as a science. To both ends we are constantly devising and trying to use tools—language, machinery, money, institutions—which are, or should be, only means to these ends: the basic science and the consummating art of living; security, fulfillment; power, virtue.

With such a general form of society for reference we can study the life of any social group, small or great, and discover its abnormalities, its diseases, and the source of its conflicts. We soon find, for example, that in trying to use tools most of our confusion arises. The tools have not been assimilated. They have become ends in themselves. They

have still to be mastered, the money tool in particular. I should suggest some such simplification or synthesis before we confuse our educational objectives by further analysis.

Our task in the schools would seem to be partly instruction, partly education. Instruction is to help the child see the life of men as an organic whole and to take care that he knows some phase of community life intimately and well. What is to be included in his instruction should be selected with a view to the child's education, which, after all, is designed to develop certain masteries, in particular, a mastery of tools (language, machines, money, institutions), and a sense of social responsibility. And the best technique of such instruction and education is to live and take part in the civilized society of a truly organic school.

Dr Rugg, I think, was right in the attitude he took in a challenging speech at the conference. He said there were three stages in reform: dissatisfaction with the old order, improvisation to meet the new situation, and the achievement of a fresh design. He said that the P.E.A. was still, after five or seven years, in the stage of improvisation. It had not yet achieved "organic form."

If I learned little from the philosophy of the conference, I did learn a good deal from its technique. The usual procedure is, first, lectures to a large audience by, say, three speakers, and then a series of "panels." In a panel discussion a few selected people, with a chairman, sit on the platform and carry on a discussion, while the audience looks on and listens. Towards the end of the discussion a few questions are invited from the audience. With a good panel and a good chairman the discussion can be kept on the line.

Usually there was plain and frank speaking in the panel. Some of the statements startled me, as, for instance, one

to the effect that the government was deliberately playing up the seriousness of incidents in China to bolster up a bellicose spirit in the community, so that it might begin a big armament programme to cover up the failure of the New Deal. I noticed that any reference to the "compromising attitude" of the British government towards the totalitarian States was approved by the audience.

There was an interesting discussion as to whether a teacher was justified in imposing his own controversial ideas upon children. There was no agreement on this, but one remark is worth quoting. It was that the more obviously prejudiced a teacher was, the less likely he was to do any harm. Most agreed that a teacher might criticize the League of Nations or the attitude of America in China or liberalism, but he might not discuss "profits" or "the capitalist society." A suggested way of relieving the teacher of some responsibility here was to have the class examine objectively the structure of their own society.

Later we went to Atlantic City to attend another conference of eleven thousand educationists from all over the United States. When we have an educational conference in New Zealand we hire a room or perhaps a hall. In America they hire a city. It is all very stimulating.

Atlantic City is a striped ribbon ten or twelve miles long and half a mile wide on a semi-detached island on the coast of New Jersey. The first strip is a bathing beach from which three or more highly expensive piers project into the Atlantic. No ships tie up at these. They are for pleasure only, or to give folks an impression of how America looks from the sea. They are a little overloaded with devices for extracting dollars. Fronting the beach is a wooden street or boardwalk, reserved for promenading pedestrians and hypochondriac

dames propelled in glassed-in perambulators by negro porters. Behind this is a gaudy strip of eating-houses, saloons, side-shows and shops, the latter displaying costly toys to tempt the wealthy patrons of this naughtyish holiday resort. Then comes a strip of magnificent and luxurious hotels, grading back through less imposing boarding houses to an ordinary business street.

In this season \* Atlantic City usually hibernates, but the throng of educationists had prodded it to a watchful and hungry awakening. I suppose by this time it has slipped back to its normal winter torpidity.

This convention, at which I spent several days, left me with an uneasy feeling. It seemed that American educators, and probably other Americans as well, were afraid of some impending catastrophe. Among educators this was often expressed as a "need to preserve our democratic institutions." Apparently America was seen as the last stronghold of democracy, the mandate for which, written into the Constitution of the United States, still held. Externally the position has been assailed by the rise of the totalitarian states, and the apparent weakening, vis-à-vis dictatorships of the left or the right, of democracies everywhere. Internally there was evidence, in the increase of juvenile delinquency, in racketeering, in growing lawlessness and violence, in political graft, and in labour disturbances, that the foundations were rocking.

Educators are rightly concerned with these manifestations and are seeking, at the same time, to discover the forces of disintegration in order to make a stand against them. They have, I think, correctly traced disorder back to a deterioration in the philosophy of freedom, which was both

\* March.

safe and inspiring so long as it operated within the framework of a social order based upon a sufficient moral code but became dangerous as freedom within the law gave place to license.

Freedom has become at the same time more individualistic and more mercenary. The old social order and the code upon which it rested have been discredited and outdated by too rapid technological changes in the conditions of life. A new synthesis in political and social philosophy has not yet been effected, and in the meantime, with no clear social pattern to which he is expected to conform and no valuable social objective to inspire him, the individual finds himself in a rough sea without compass or rudder. Only one thing seems clear to him. He must get money. That is at once the way to security and to distinction. As for the rules of the game, well, there aren't any. You make your own these days.

By the time the boy comes to high school his life, judging by his interests, is already in a bit of a mess. The task of the school is threefold: to discover at least the elements of a sane social order beneath all the superficial confusion and conflict, to bring the school life into conformity with that social order, and to give the boy school experiences leading to successful adjustment to that order. By successful adjustment I mean that within the social order of the school he achieves a sense of security and, at the same time, distinction.

I attended several panel discussions on "the dynamic or life-centered curriculum." The discussions fell far below the promise of the title. There were two elements present. One, sincere enough, I believe, was still baffled by such difficulties as the prestige of the college preparatory course, the



expense involved in new equipment, and the incompetence, timidity, and mediocrity of teachers. The other element, the enthusiasts for the "dynamic or life-centered curriculum" had, I am afraid, done little serious thinking about it. They belonged to the satellite body that always follows a philosopher. They had adopted his language, but in their mouths it had become a jargon. There is a tendency to crystallize the ideas of the real educational leaders in the form of slogans, which are either adopted or discarded by the rank and file. I feel that some of the teachers who were using such terms as "core area, pattern, dynamic, life-centred, integration," really did not know what they were talking about. Perhaps that was because I was not clear myself as to the meaning of some of these terms. Similarly they seemed disposed to correct deficiencies in the curriculum by introducing a new subject. Thus one had pointed out that personal characteristics were important in social relationships. "Then," said his followers, "let us have 'personal relationships' in the curriculum." Today it appears that five to ten per cent of the high school students take credits in "personal relationships." "Citizenship" and "Americanization" are subjects that seem to have entered the curriculum by the same process. That kind of thing may suggest what is wrong with many excellent educational schemes in America. I am not confident that such methods of organizing the curriculum will ever make it truly organic.

The bits of the conference I saw can scarcely give a true estimate of its value. I know that I could not keep up with it. I was on the move all the time from the auditorium to the something-or-other room at the Traymore or along the boardwalk chasing a quick (and cheap) lunch. And it seemed that most of the delegates also belonged to the

peripatetic and eclectic schools. At any given moment you would find them in transit between a dozen simultaneous meetings: on the boardwalk, in the corridors of the huge auditorium, or in the great hall temporarily converted into an exhibition of educational equipment. I believe that these conferences do good work, but the best part is the least organized—the informal discussions, and the casual contacts.

Two other notes on Atlantic City before we leave it. There was an astonishing display of school furnishings, books, and equipment. I was green with envy. Such things are for us, I am afraid, still far ahead. I had many occasions to think of our department's parsimonious reply to our request for biological apparatus. One of the first things I intend to do in Wellington on my way home is to apply the metaphorical toe of a metaphorical boot to somebody's metaphorical—well, as I was saying, we are a long way behind.

The other item of news is that we had a marvelous entertainment in the auditorium on the night before leaving for Washington. The auditorium, by the way, is a huge amphitheatre, in which it is said that a nine-storey building could be erected. I forget how many thousands it will accommodate—forty-five, I think. In the afternoon part of the arena was railed off and frozen. It was strange to see the water actually freezing in the heat of the room. A network of pipes from refrigerating apparatus is permanently bedded in the concrete base. In the evening, a huge audience had a fine display of skating—waltzing, trick skating, and tableaux. The best was by a Swedish lady—I've forgotten her name \*—who was runner-up at the Olympic Games. You have seen Sonja Henie at the movies, so you will have some idea of it.

\* Vivi-Anne Hulten.



~ Letter 10 ~

## NEW DESIGNS FOR LIVING

I am doing all that I can to see housing schemes, whether of the slum-clearance kind or the building of community areas for commuters from the cities. Two of the latter are the Greenbelt township near Washington, and Radburn, New Jersey, about both of which I told you something before leaving New Zealand. I hope that anything I say will not discourage you in your replanning of Rangiora. You remember that we saw plans of both villages on paper, and they looked fine to us. Now I've seen them both in reality,

and the plans, the location, and the surroundings are quite as good as I hoped. They seemed to promise almost ideal living conditions—perhaps they will yet. But—I'm sorry there is a "but," several "buts" in fact—the costs have been too high, twice or three times what they would be in New Zealand, neither scheme could be completed, and the people coming into the settlements lack something necessary for successful community living. The way of life is strange to them; they are, many of them, like fish out of water. They have plots of land but don't know what to do with them, and (what is more serious) they have little idea of how to associate in community life. They have always depended upon someone else for education, entertainment, health service, and so on. Now in the Greenbelt township, which is a federal government enterprise, they seem disposed to stay at the point where the government has dropped them.

In Radburn, an earlier scheme by a business corporation, there has been a little more progress. The partial failure in carrying out the plan has resulted mostly from sheer hard luck, the company having been caught in the depression years with big commitments for land, a heavy tax burden, and no revenue. I do not know all the facts, but I was impressed by what I did learn of the courage of the corporation, as well as by the vision of those who projected the plan. Such a plan deserves to succeed, and I hope that it may yet.

In both cases, however, purchase and rental values are far too high, as much for a room as we are asking, in our government housing schemes, for a four-roomed house. In Radburn, for example, an average six-room brick house on a plot of land sixty to seventy feet by one hundred and

thirty feet costs twelve thousand dollars and has a rental value of ninety dollars a month.

Now let me tell you something of a slum-clearance project I saw in New York. This is known as Knickerbocker Village, but you would not guess from the name that the "village" is a couple of huge twelve-storey apartment buildings covering two city blocks in one of the most congested slum areas of the lower East Side, near Manhattan Bridge. These impressive fire-proof buildings, with something over six thousand rooms, have replaced what was said to be the worst slum in America.

What happened to the slum people who formerly squatted in the area no one seemed to know, but certainly they are not occupying the new buildings.

So far as I could learn, the property, the only value of which was in the land, came on to the market, and the New York State Housing Board collaborated with a finance corporation and another private business concern to carry out the enterprise. The buildings themselves are two rectangular hollow blocks each enclosing a garden space of about an acre and separated from each other by a children's playground. The sides of the rectangle are two rooms thick, so that each room faces either on a street or one of the gardens or courts.

The rooms for rental are grouped in one thousand five hundred and ninety-three apartments (or flats) of two and a half, three and a half, four and a half, and five and a half rooms each. The average rental is twelve and a half dollars per room per month. In flats, according to location, this works out at:—

2½ rooms \$22½ to \$32½ per month

3½ rooms \$36¼ to \$52¼ per month

4½ rooms \$50¼ to \$62¼ per month  
5½ rooms \$66 to \$71 per month  
Penthouses \$50 to \$90 per month

Of course very poor people cannot occupy these flats, and, in any case, to ensure that the occupants can really afford to live there, there is a condition that the rental they pay shall not exceed twenty per cent of their wages or salary. The apartments have proved popular with city clerks and business people, who consider themselves well served by having their homes so near the downtown financial and shipping areas. At the time of my visit there were practically no vacant flats.

I asked a good many questions about the effects of the new building schemes upon the adjoining district and whether there were signs that a genuine community spirit was developing, but for the question uppermost in my mind there was no answer and probably little concern, What had become of the slum people?

And now I must tell you about the housing play we saw in New York. Mr Dollard, of the Carnegie Corporation, who has been so good to us all through, insisted that we must really see a Living Newspaper production before we left New York.

He had got us tickets for the housing play that had been running at the Adelphi for some months. So one night towards the end of March we found our way to the theatre in 54th Street, where we discovered something new and vitally significant in stage craft.

The Living Newspaper is, so far as I know, the invention of the WPA Federal Theater, a branch of the great federal institution that is promoting schemes for congenial and useful employment of its citizens. The United States Gov-

ernment has realized that such schemes as major public works, which are suitable enough to absorb the mass of unskilled or semiskilled labour available, still leave many talented and professionally trained men and women without opportunity to give the kind of service they are able and willing to give. The people that have produced the Living Newspaper include unemployed actors, writers, newspaper men and others with academic or technical training. I believe the idea came from these people themselves, and that the role of the government has been simply to encourage it and to help financially and otherwise in its organization and development.

A Living Newspaper is a fully documented stage presentation of some significant national problem that often gets into the news. The housing problem, for example, had been forcibly brought before the public by such tragic incidents as a recent fatal fire in the lower East Side, but no one seemed to know exactly who was to blame, what was to be done about it, or why the problem of slum clearance was so stubborn. And, even if these things had been known, there was no assurance that anything would be done. The WPA group undertook the task with two objects in view; to get the whole story, and to tell it effectually. Well, I think they succeeded both ways.

The title chosen, . . . *one third of a nation*, was suggested by one of the President's addresses, in which he said that he found "one third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, and ill-nourished." The Federal Theater Project will keep that phrase alive until, let it be hoped, it no longer applies.

I have made detailed notes on the play which I shall bring to you.



~ Letter II ~

## THE LINCOLN SCHOOL

We have taken rooms, or what our bright little landlady calls a "studio," on Riverside Drive overlooking the Hudson. We are seven stories above the street and have a delightful view of a stretch of busy waterway. The trees along the Drive are showing signs that the sap is beginning to flow and that the winter sleep is over. Ice packs—or perhaps they are lumps of snow—are floating down the river. In the dark these might easily be Indian canoes coming down from Canada to Manhattan. It is not so long ago since they did.



There's a talkie theatre around the corner, but we have no desire to go. Movies seem "flat and unprofitable" compared with what we can see from the window in the morning or from the top of a Fifth Avenue bus on our way home at night. There is plenty of excitement too, sometimes. The other night we got out at the West 110th Street subway station on Broadway just in time to see a real man hunt. The fat proprietor of the corner store was out on the street in his apron, running around in circles, waving his arms, tearing his hair, and yelling for the police. A gunman had just held him up and robbed him in his own well-lit shop in full view of his assistant, several customers, and people in the street. The thief had jumped into a taxi—probably by arrangement—and made off. There followed a wild five minutes, with everyone rushing around, whistles blowing, women with poodles and dachshunds in tow scrambling out of the way. The pavements seemed to sprout policemen. Some of them, after an argument with the driver, made off in a taxi. They were back in a few minutes with the thief, a well-enough-dressed young fellow of the Latin type, little more than a boy. In his smouldering eyes was no sign of fear—rather resentment, defiance, hatred.

In spite of such diversions we have been very quiet and comfortable here and well looked after by our chatty little black maid from Harlem. Her name, of course, is Pearl. We took these rooms partly because they were so near to Columbia University and Lincoln School, where I spend a good deal of time. Lincoln School, as you know, is associated with Teachers College at Columbia. Here, if anywhere, one should find what American teachers believe to be the problems the schools should face and try to solve. I only wish I had had more time to study the Lincoln School

philosophy and method. As a visitor not connected with the college or even with American schools, I did not care to encroach too much upon the time of busy people. Those I did see were very nice about it—could not have been nicer or more American, which, I am beginning to think, is much the same thing.

Lincoln School attempts to meet postwar social problems, so it has its eye all the time on the postwar world, anyway a bit of it, and quite an important bit. What sort of a world is it? According to those who are doing the hard thinking at Lincoln School, an apparently stable civilization has become unstable, old moral sanctions are discredited, big changes are taking place in every direction and the future is unpredictable. In fact ours is a disturbing, distracting, and shocking kind of a world for children to grow up in. "Disintegrating," is the word they use to describe the effect. Now, in such a world the old "idea-forming institutions" are not of much use. They are not competent to restrain, direct, or control mass movements that may attain a blundering and destructive drive. In particular, the schools are not giving the guidance and help that they should to young people subjected to such disturbing influences. They are not, indeed, presenting a true picture of the world as it is, or accepting the social responsibility of helping to build a better world.

Lincoln School tries to accept these responsibilities. The school has extraordinary advantages for such a task. It can and does avail itself of the services of the most talented teachers and administrators that America can produce. It has no need to stint itself in the matter of such material equipment as libraries. Its intimate connection with Teachers College and Columbia University gives it intellectual

resources that few schools could hope for. It enjoys the co-operation of exceptionally intelligent parents, and the social environment and intelligence of the students themselves are of a high order. Then, in common with other schools associated with the P.E.A.'s committee on the relation of school and college, it has five years of freedom from the threat of a college entrance examination, so that the last ditch of the traditional academic course has been taken. Finally, it can plan an unbroken course of schooling for children from three years of age up to eighteen or nineteen.

What more could a school want? Well, from my point of view, which may be wrong, there is one grave disadvantage—the site of the school. I suppose it is impracticable, but I would have made a big effort to have the school moved out into the country, say to Westchester county, if only to get away from noise, distraction, and the glare of the publicity spotlight. I think that is a consideration for any school, and especially so for one that has set itself a task calling for serious reflection and the objective view. I hope I may not be misunderstood if I suggest that such a move would not be running away from life but getting closer to it. New York is a wonderful city, but, after all, it does not present a true cross section of human life and civilization, not even of American life. There are too many elements missing. That lack must be a disadvantage to a school that is trying to see life whole and to catch the theme of the human drama staged between the earth and the stars.

The clue that Lincoln School seems to follow at the moment can be expressed in one word, "integration." The characteristic of life today is disintegration, disunity, conflict. There is, as the principal, Dr Lester Dix, has pointed out, "a fundamental disunity between areas of economic

subsistence, provision and production, and the areas of control by appropriate ideologies." In other words, if I may presume to translate, we have been very successful in making tools and other cunning social devices but have failed to find a clear and worthy use for them, or to use them in a masterly way. Such devices, of course, are machines, money, and social institutions. Here, then, is the basic disunity. The school must reveal it and seek a method by which it can be harmonized.

There is a related disunity between the fine arts and the industrial or practical arts. Our social life and institutions have not yet the qualities that are satisfying to an artist. By comparison with a fine piece of architecture or a Bach concerto our social culture is crude, irrational, and unfinished. As Dr Dix puts it: "It is profoundly destructive in a culture to have a situation in which the fine arts become unrelated to and unrooted in the industrial and practical arts, with the result that the practical arts lose all ideality and rationality, and the fine arts are bereft of reality and vitality."

The principal refers to a third disunity, marked by "the divisive attitudes of group warfare and the extreme rarity with which supposedly educated people find it possible to think and act in terms of general social interest." There are, for example, conflicts between town and country interests, and between workers and employers. Some attempt at bringing these interests together in a general social purpose may be made when there is danger of a national catastrophe, but it is part of the duty of the schools to "provide the widespread and sustained social interest that is required if we are to meet the formidable unsolved problems of our national life. The effort of the Lincoln School staff is a unified experimental attempt to find an educational philosophy and practice that

will offer some promise of a generation that will face such problems with interest, with courage, with realism, and with imagination."

So much, then, for the ideas behind the Lincoln School practice. You will agree that the school has taken on a very big job and you will be interested to know what the school life is like. Well, the first thing, obviously, was to plan a suitable course of studies and activities. Lincoln's way is not new, at least in respect to a general plan. Like some other modern schools it has given up traditional courses of more or less unrelated subjects and has substituted an "integrated curriculum" with electives. The integrated curriculum is much the same thing as the core course of some other American schools, and our own organic course. The theme for the Lincoln course is "The Evolution of World Cultures."

In the analysis of this theme Lincoln finds it convenient to distinguish four main studies. These are: the study of cultural evolution (mainly the history of social institutions); the study of natural environment; the study of the arts of communication, expression, and imagination; and the study of self and personality. Integrated courses bringing in these four main studies and suitable to different age groups are then planned by groups of teachers with some help from the students.

The approach to this curriculum in the elementary school is a study of community life. The youngest children build a play city. Eight-year-olds are studying the children of other lands, nine-year-olds are interested in aviation, while the older children have such themes as "radio" and "inventions."

In the high school the core course resolves itself into more systematic and progressive studies in social history,

English, mathematics, science, the fine and practical arts, and athletics and games.

Perhaps I can give you some impression of how the school works by describing what I saw in two Grade 9 classes working on the theme study, "Living in the machine age." The first class was dealing with housing.

There were about twenty girls and boys in the room and two or three teachers. They sat around tables placed irregularly in the room. There were several visitors present, mainly, I think, student teachers. The children took no notice whatever of visitors.

The opening discussion was very general until one boy's outline of the "standards of very good housing" began some ordered study, which led to the standards being written on the blackboard as follows: plumbing, light, air, private baths, cooking facilities, heating, recreational facilities (libraries), safety (fireproofing, fire escape, open spaces, doors opening out), firm, strong construction, privacy, view, neighbourhood (stores, nearness to work, transportation, good houses, well-lighted streets, quiet), space, stairway, method of garbage disposal, room rent compared with income, services.

The discussion was very animated by about half the class, sometimes too brisk for me to follow. There was frank criticism of some of the housing schemes of New York. The children seemed to know a good deal about "rackets" in building. One student produced figures to show the piling up of costs in tenement housing. I learned that there were more private baths in America than anywhere else.

The children were obviously keenly interested in the subject and had prepared thoroughly. Members of the class had an excellent publication, the issue of *Building America*

dealing with housing, published by Columbia Teachers College. One girl had a collection of pamphlets published by The Council for Social Action.

Discussion continued upon follow-up projects, and a good bibliography was outlined. One girl proposed to discuss the relations between housing and juvenile delinquency.

The other Grade 9 class was discussing "Our Power Resources." The subject was opened by a boy who gave an address from notes which he illustrated with well-drawn charts. The teacher and several students asked questions which were well answered. Questions were raised as to how to save some of the wastages characteristic of power development and as to the possibility of finding substitutes for petroleum oil.

Another boy read a good paper about the use of electrical power in different districts. This was followed by a discussion that was much to the point. The class was evidently aware of the conflict between private and government interests in hydroelectric-power development.

I was impressed by this class and by its teacher, who summed up the discussion in a masterly way and outlined the problems still awaiting solution. As a follow-up he suggested that the class study tendencies, significances, and the "so-what" of electrical power development.

Now here is an impression of a Grade 10 class on English literature. The teacher was Mr Stolper. Again there were several teachers in the room and a good sized gallery. The class had been studying Utopias in literature, and some of the results of their research were shown comprehensively on a wall chart arranged so as to show comparatively the ideas on various aspects of social life as expressed in the well-known literary Utopias.

Cross headings were: *The Republic, Erewhon, The City of God, Utopia, The City of the Sun, The New Atlantis, Lycurgus, Looking Backward, News from Nowhere, Men Like Gods, The Time Machine, The Shape of Things to Come, Brave New World, Lost Horizon, In the Days of the Comet*, etc. Top headings were: Property, Money, Commerce, Production, War, Government, Religion, Suffrage, Health, Education, Marriage, Women, Old Age, Leisure, Cities, Population, Labour, Immigration, The Artist, Attitude towards Innovations, Crime, Man and Class, etc. Round the walls were several crayon murals done by the students. These seemed in the main to symbolize the new idealism in social relationships. Thus truth with justice was represented by the sun and a balance. The hammer and sickle symbol was also in evidence, but I do not remember the swastika.

The relationships of student and teacher seemed to be very natural and friendly. It was obvious that there was complete understanding and community of interest, and that in all matters each respected the other's point of view. As a sort of progress report of a friendly character each student replied to a "confessional questionnaire." There were a few confessions of having left undone the things they ought to have done. That being off their consciences, they were prepared to accept new assignments.

Two students were sent to the library to discover people now living in New York who were writing novels. Meantime the teacher gave some extracts from books he had been reading "just for fun." One selection described in a humorous vein the devices of the selling "racket"—companies "trying to skin someone." What did the class think about it? They agreed that they should not sign contracts to buy



things on the instalment plan. "How much of that would go on in your ideal state?" This led up to a brisk discussion that covered a wide field: instalment selling, capitalistic finance, and big navy expenditure. Someone raised the question as to whether the debts of the Civil War were paid yet.

A poem was then read and discussed. After a short recess another teacher took charge and began by checking up on those who had not yet conducted an interview or found a job and got a report from the employer. These, apparently, were standing assignments, and very good ones too.

Before leaving the class I got some further information on assignments. These were: reports on church visits, reports on jobs of work done outside the school, interviews with people in professional life, imaginary trips, the Utopia notebook, and graphic illustrations of current history.

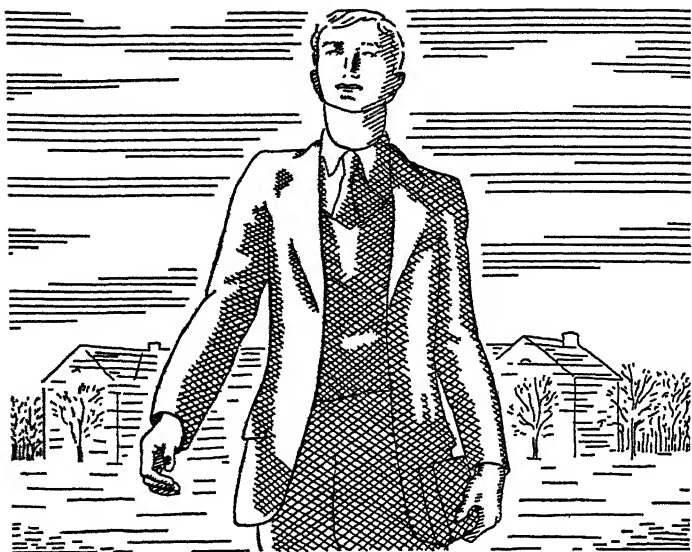
Lincoln School has no preconceived ideas as to what children should study or work at in school. John R. Clark \* states the aim thus: "The high school seeks to set up situations which provide abundant opportunity for every pupil to practice self-direction and self-control, initiative and inventiveness, and the difficult art of co-ordinating his efforts and interests with those of his fellows." I believe that in this respect the school has succeeded very well, within the general life situation of the boys and girls who attend Lincoln School. But do we need such elaborate equipment and organization to discover that intelligent children, whose general situation does not involve danger, economic insecurity, or a struggle to earn a livelihood, will, given opportunity and encouragement, show some ingenuity in ensuring that school life, whatever else it may be, will be entertaining?

I have been reading a first-hand account in the *Teachers*

\* In 1938, principal of the High School of Lincoln School.

*College Record* of the general course on American culture followed by the Grade 12 students. It began with the newspaper and quickly got into stride. A New York daily, advertising, radio, visits to N.B.C. and the C.B.S. studios. Discussion on musical programmes, visit to the opera *Car-men*, and more radio programmes. Then kindred arts, pictures at the Whitney museum, drama, a round of theatre visits. Housing, a model exhibit of slum housing and a visit to an ultramodern home. Luncheon meetings of the Academy of Political Science, visits to a museum and a flower show. A period of intensive study—Beard, La Follette, Lewis Mumford—relieved a bit with modern novels, poetry, and drama, and then the final opportunity for individual and group expression, a mural, two one-act plays, a radio sketch, a motion picture taken and displayed, an assembly of folk songs, a modern-dance programme, an outdoor sketching picnic, and a folk-dance party.

Who wouldn't go to Lincoln? But this is not for all boys. Most teachers must contrive quite other situations to try what stuff their students are made of.



~ Letter 12 ~

## THE LAWRENCEVILLE SCHOOL

A visit to Lawrenceville \* was Mr. Dollard's idea. He must have guessed I would be the better for it, but he did not say why. I think I know now. I am glad I did go although an eminent educationist to whom I mentioned the visit thought Lawrenceville was a bit off my line of country. Perhaps in some ways it was, but not so far off as he

\* The Lawrenceville School, Lawrenceville, N. J.

thought. Lawrenceville has something I have missed in most of the schools I have visited, especially lately.

For a month or so I have been seeing schools in New York City, and have become more and more depressed by a sense of the handicaps under which these schools labour. How, in such conditions can they fulfill the tasks a school must attempt? I admire the heroic efforts the teachers in some of these schools are making to educate their children, despite the distracting din and the lumpish, disintegrating impact of their environment. But how can they give children an objective and credible view of life, while ninety per cent of their sense impression comes from those noisiest, most menacing and least significant aspects of life, that alone are to be found in their immediate environment? I was not surprised to find that some teachers were so used to these conditions that they accepted them as normal and mistook signs of alertness and precocity in their children for the marks of healthy growth.

If mere survival and successful adaptation to the life of the big commercial city of today is the first object of education, then these schools are, of course, wonderfully successful. There is no nonsense about them. They accept the world—their world—as it is, and do not waste their energies by undue consideration of the world as it was, or as it might be, or of a world somewhere else. And so teaching practice is the working-out of a genuine philosophy. It gives realism in education. It is as if they said: "Just so and hereabouts do men live. These are their objectives, and thus do they struggle and scheme and strive to attain them. So do they protect themselves, and these are the things to possess and to take advantage of."

By this I do not mean that there is no attempt to widen

the horizons of the children or to help them organize their lives. There certainly is. I saw in New York some of the best conceived educational projects that I have seen anywhere. But—or so it seemed to me—these experiments were more or less ruined by the conditions under which they were carried out and by the failure of those concerned to accept any other set of values than those accepted in their own environment. Thus the educational projects took on the character of stunts worked up with much preliminary ballyhoo and accompanied and followed up by much publicity and advertisement.

I heard, for example, of an excursion from a great New York school to the Tennessee Valley. What a great project, I thought. Then I read some of the children's accounts of their experience. The first began, "This trip has certainly commenced with a bang." As I read on I found that the newspapers had treated the whole thing as a spectacular affair and that the children lived in a blaze of publicity. There were press photographs of J . . . , the daughter of So-and-So, milking a cow, and of somebody else mending a fence. For the children it was from first to last a thrilling spotlight and headline experience. So much so that I felt that it must have been impossible for most of them to benefit in the way that was hoped by those who planned the project. There were included, of course, such promising features as talks by experts on the Tennessee Valley project, but these the children—some of them, anyway—treated as rather boring interludes. The degree of patience with which they listened to these talks, was, I found, strongly affected by the political bias of the children's parents. Even in that respect the children had brought the din and strife of their city

with them, so that they were unable to give quiet and reflective thought to what they saw and heard.

I hope I may be proved wrong in some of my judgments. I know that I have a bias in favour of quietness. I think the world today is altogether too noisy for children. I would keep as much of that noise out of our schools as possible. I felt that noisiness was sometimes deliberately introduced. In this respect such schools as Lawrenceville provide a welcome relief.

I got off the bus and entered the gates of Lawrenceville. There, for a while, I stopped. I had the same sense of liberation and relief that I felt on a former visit to America, when, after a round of cities, I found myself alone on a snowy peak above Lake Louise.

I had no special desire to find out anything about the school curriculum, the educational theories proposed by the staff, or the projects being carried out. I might find in the school a craze for chemistry or Sanscrit or politics or polo. That did not seem to matter. What was obvious was that the school was an organic growth—not an institution established to counteract the influence of an unfavourable environment, but rather something that had grown and was growing naturally, normally, and not too rapidly, in congenial surroundings. In other words, it did not look like a school, but rather a place where boys might be found living together with their teachers, and possibly with their parents, happily associated in study, work, and play.

The school grounds merged imperceptibly into the rural landscape. There was, no doubt, a legal boundary, but there was nothing to mark it but a hedge. Beyond were the same trees and lawns and pastures. The buildings harmonized

with the setting and seemed designed to meet the needs and express the aspirations of a community becoming more aware of its relations and more catholic in its tastes. There was nothing that looked like a schoolroom: homes, certainly, a chapel, a library, and a building with the simple lines of our architectural period, which I took to be the administration building. I found my way there and met Dr Heely.\*

I am not going to say that I found in Lawrenceville all that I think a school might be, or even that I think the directors were making the most of their favourable conditions or taking full advantage in planning their curriculum of their freedom from political interference. Allowance must be made for the fact that the boys are a selected and privileged group, and that to prepare for college is a primary aim. If advantages such as Lawrenceville affords could be made available for all social groups and in all schools, there would, in some of these schools, be some very significant developments. Of that I feel sure.

I imagine how eagerly many teachers would set about an organic relationship of their curriculum to community life if their schools gave the opportunity for quiet objective study that is to be found in the setting, the equipment, the staffing arrangements, and the relationships of Lawrenceville. Apart from this there is little that I think one could do other than praise this fine school, in which are to be found combined so much that is good in the great English public schools, and the zest, virility, and high idealism that characterize American life at its best.

Through the kindness of Dr Heely I was able to learn much about the school's interesting history and to see something of its organization and equipment. Founded by a

\* Allan V. Heely, head master, the Lawrenceville School.

clergyman in 1810, the school began with an attendance of nine boys and has grown without spectacular developments until today it serves five hundred students. This, by the way, is the deliberate limit that has been set. The school has no obsession about mere bigness. I was glad of that. I have had bigness thrust upon me too often.

The school's ideas of future growth are thus stated by Dr Heely: "What the future requires is a gradual perfecting of what we have." There is to be a growth in usefulness, in range, and in scope, in the perfection of function, but not in mere size. These ideas are well expressed at Lawrenceville as it is today and in its plans for the future. I found, for example, that the five hundred boys were associated with seventy masters. Class units are limited to twelve, and these, as is appropriate, have adopted the conference plan of study. Class groups sit around conference tables with their masters in rooms that are really studies or sectional libraries. Laboratory units are on the same scale.

That is a fine plan, which, of course, could not be carried out without ample resources. In this and other respects the school has had much help from loyal alumni, parents, and generous friends. Assistance has, in general, come without any widespread appeal for funds. The school values its independence too much for that and prefers to grow slowly and normally. Just as class units are small, so are the groups in residence. In 1883 the school adopted the small-unit housing system of the English public schools, thus pioneering the movement in America. The social benefits to students and teachers are obvious.

Two institutions that must be considered essential in any good school today are the alumni association and the fathers' association. Each of these has given a building to the school.

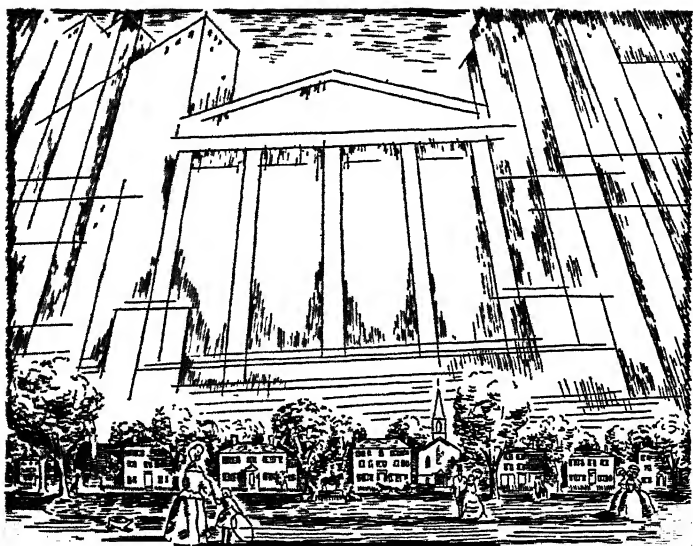


The Alumni Study was opened in 1921 and the fathers' building some four years later. These seem to me to be very wise developments. I know of no good school that has not cultivated the association of its alumni, and many schools are realizing how valuable an association of parents can be. Financial help is probably the least of the benefits. Such a school as Lawrenceville cannot be looked upon as a mere temporary convenience functioning for a few years in the life of its students. The association once established is for life. The school now recognizes no limiting conditions of time and space, and its growth becomes organic and perpetual. This is a much surer way to establish a school tradition than mere dependence upon preserving old buildings or old customs.

The health of students is well looked after at Lawrenceville, as in all the best American schools. Athletics, games, life in the open air, diet, and careful medical attention and supervision are given much attention. There are five playing fields, a gymnasium, soon to be replaced by a wonderfully planned sports building, a good swimming bath, and a well-equipped infirmary. Practically every form of athletic sports is practiced. Baseball, tennis, football, soccer, rowing, swimming, golf, boxing, wrestling, polo, hockey, basketball, fencing, and track athletics figure in the imposing list of activities. One wonders how time is found for serious study, but comparison of academic successes with those of other schools show that Lawrenceville is not behindhand in the development of scholarship. I think this success is due to three things. The boys are in residence, so that school life is not a matter of five hours daily association; Lawrenceville is very well equipped; and the school has developed a fine classroom technique.

It is only fair to add that the curriculum of studies, though broader and more differentiated than in many schools, is still, I thought, rather narrow, academic, and bookish. A school so well placed and so well staffed has a great opportunity to conduct a regional survey and so to discover the bearing of some of their studies upon community problems.

However that may be, I have said enough to show that, taking into consideration the special aims of the school, I was favourably impressed by what I saw of the boys, the teachers, the equipment, and the organization. I expect to find the nearest parallels in the best English public schools.



~ Letter 13 ~

## A CHANGING CULTURE

We are getting nearly to the end of our visit to America, and I feel that there is a great deal more I should have told you had I not been so busy. Lately I have been giving most of my time to studying adult education and community educational centres.

Nearly half the people in the United States, adults as well as children, attend school or take advantage of some form of organized education. The schools and colleges are full of eager, vigorous youths and maidens who go to their

educational tasks as if to a festival. The trade schools are hard put to it to find accommodation for ever increasing numbers pressing to be admitted. Adult educational institutions are springing up everywhere. Conferences of teachers reveal the zest and vitality of a joyous adventure. Never before has there been such searching, such bold experiments, and such generous support for new educational ventures. Does this mean a genuine awakening? Is America, that has so rapidly assumed technological leadership in the world, about to lead the world also in the development of an appropriate social culture and philosophy?

America's greatest teacher once described a noble maiden as one who "searches in turn all objects that solicit her eye, that she may learn the power and charm of her new-born being, which is the kindling of a new dawn in the recesses of space." Is that what America, the youthful maiden of our civilization, is about? Or is she, if Emerson again will put the question, to be likened to those "extraordinary young men, who never ripened, whose tone was that of a youthful giant, sent to work revolutions" but on whom "the tough world had its revenge the moment they put their horses of the sun to plough in its furrow?"

Well, America will supply her own answer before long, I think; before it is too late, I hope. Meantime, without passing judgments that would be premature, one might speculate a little upon the motives of the modern adult education movements. Where does the urge lie, and what is behind it? Is it growth or uplift or protection? Is it a spiritual renaissance or a new game? Is it dictated by fear or born of prophetic vision? Perhaps all of these elements are in it.

I watched crowds of young people enrolling in the trade schools and spoke to some of them. I questioned their teach-

ers. There was no doubt about where the urge came from. It was in the young people themselves, not in the authorities who provided the schools. The young people were demanding to be educated. Why? To get on, to succeed, to make money, to avoid the grinding worry and shame of material poverty, and so to attain power, social status, self-respect. That is the basic necessity, the *sine qua non* in America, as in most other places. Education is good business. The commercial correspondence schools, which make no bones about motives, are losing ground, not because the "big money idea" is losing its appeal, but because their methods are outdated by the new schools.

I believe that so far as the urge from the students is concerned self-advancement is the main drive in the adult education movement. It may not, at first sight, seem a very worthy one, but I am convinced that it contains many good elements. These young people, and older ones too, certainly hope for bigger rewards, but they are prepared to win them through giving a better service. To that end they are working and making sacrifices to educate themselves. Surely such an attitude is nobler than that of the lazy loafer who has no shame in living upon money he doesn't earn—whether his grandmother or the state provides it doesn't matter. The mere fact that they choose the educational way out of the ranks of unskilled labour (a pretty useless commodity since the bull-dozer ousted the donkey) is fairly strong evidence that money-making for them is not an end in itself, and that the reward for their service will be worthily used.

But apart from that, it seems that the educational possibilities of skilled work are widening once more. The first effects of introducing powered machines have certainly been the mass production of standardized products and the elim-

ination of the craftsman. But that is because the machine is only half assimilated. As more of the drudgery of routinized labour on the production of standardized necessities is made mechanical and automatic, there will again be more scope for intelligence and artistry in craftsmanship. It will be our own fault if we do not take advantage of the urge to acquire vocational skill by devising a training programme that is educational in its highest sense.

In sharp contrast to the vocational school movement stands the agricultural extension movement. Here the urge is as definitely from above. Professional sense of duty leads the way. The agricultural colleges and the Public Service realize that in the rural industries, which are the most vital in the national life, there is the greatest lag between scientific knowledge and its industrial applications. The Federal government sees the dangers inherent in a situation compounded of ineffective agriculture, poor living conditions, and the exploitation of a rather helpless class. Education is seen as the way out, first for more national production, then for better rural homes, and finally for the social stability and general betterment of the rural population.

But such educational work in rural districts is difficult. The average countryman does not easily accept new ideas, he has a wholesome contempt for the theorist, and there are other characteristic products of his lonely thinking that make him difficult to reach. Usually, too, the would-be educator has to deal with that remnant of a rural population which has been least awakened by the education it got in rather poor elementary schools. The brightest have got out—to the cities. The farmer, too, must work when he can. He knows no eight-hour day and has little time or inclination for anything beyond his work.

Nevertheless, the social value of this movement is great. It must go on. It is vital and, despite its difficulties, is becoming effective. Rehabilitation is proceeding; genuine husbandry is replacing the mining methods of a prodigal age; rural living conditions are being improved; and rural social leadership is being awakened. More significant, still, perhaps, the educational urge is beginning to come from the rural people themselves.

The desire for entertainment may account for the popularity of some educational projects. Morse A. Cartwright, Director of the American Association for Adult Education, suggests that perhaps half of those attending the ten thousand groups in the country are "chiefly interested in school politics, in bridge tournaments, and other like superficialities." In other projects associated with community centres there is a premium upon mere entertainment, and I strongly suspected a similar drift in many school curricula.

Now, of course, everything depends upon the nature of the entertainment. It may be truly recreational and, therefore, educational; in which case it is all to the good. But the character of much popular entertainment in America—and elsewhere for that matter—is not wholesome. No good purpose can be served by following such a lead in educational movements. On the other hand the growth of literary reading circles, dramatic clubs, amateur musical and art societies, historical pageants, hobby clubs, and nature-study circles is a healthy sign. All available evidence shows that more and more people in America are taking a joyful part in activities that are educational and recreational at the same time.

I found that a very persistent motive in the schools was the need for better education in order to save democracy.

It is probably just as strong a motive, perhaps stronger, in the adult education movement. Thus Dr Cartwright says: "Education is the only valid protection against Fascism, Communism, and all other extremisms." And again, "Adult education and democracy go hand in hand—if we abandon one, perforce we must abandon the other."

You remember that several speakers at the New Zealand Conference of the New Education Fellowship expressed the same convictions, and I heard them repeated many times in schools and conferences in America. Thus in a faculty report from New Trier High School I read this: "Is democracy failing? The question seems to imply a fear that democracy may be destroyed by the weaknesses that are developing within it. What are the sources of these weaknesses? One answer at least is obvious—an inadequately educated citizenry."

I wish that the faculty had gone on to define the weaknesses and to say what would be an adequate education for citizenship. But the report is rather vague about these things. Emerson in his day quoted a public servant who was a little more precise when he said: "This country is filling up with thousands and millions of voters, and you must educate them to keep them from our throats." Well, that was clear enough, but it does not seem quite to fit the case today, although it may indicate one remaining element of danger.

This fear of the failure of democracy is a post-war phenomenon, to some extent it is a post-slump phenomenon. It is a product of an age of increased power and lowered morals. Might is right, violence is having its way. America has been the ultrademocratic country, giving her people unheard-of liberties. All went fairly well while America was prospering exceedingly. Many people became fabulously rich, some-



times by dubious methods, but so long as a fair amount of the nation's wealth filtered down to the lowest ranks it did not matter much.

Then came the war with its lies, its violence, its contempt of moral law. There were evil repercussions in every department of life. America's unfortunate experience in trying to enforce prohibition revealed the moral deterioration. Then came racketeering, kidnaping, gangster methods, all getting more than enough publicity in the sensational press.

Until then, too, there had been some sacredness in bonds and contracts. Civilization, such as it was, had some foundations in honour. But there have been defalcations and repudiations. There has been little international good faith since.

Still, there might be a pretense of faith. Everyone had not discovered yet how rotten were the foundations. In the exuberant optimism that followed the war, business proposed a new game—a sort of musical chairs with a jazz accompaniment. America led the way, selling goods to impoverished Europe, financing the debtor, boosting industrial stocks. It was a merry game while it lasted, and America was on top of the world. Everyone was making money. Then came the financial crash.

Every industrial country suffered, America very severely. All attempted to recover. There were changes of government in most countries. In some there were revolutions. Everywhere there was a reaction against capitalism. Russia, under the dictatorship of the Communist party, seemed to have survived the shock fairly well. Germany, out of the depths, listened to a New Messiah, who, in exchange for their liberties, gave the people much that he promised. The political leaders of Britain and France, vis-à-vis the dictators,

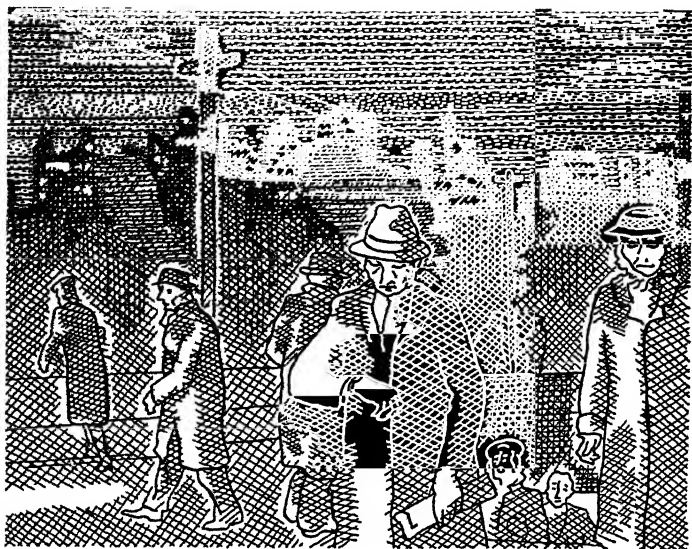
were apparently weakening. America saw herself as the last stronghold of democracy, but America does not know how far it can trust its people to support a government that does not give them what they want—a decent standard of living.

The alternatives in the event of break down, either anarchy or government dictatorship, would almost certainly set a period to the age of splendid achievement which America has associated with the individual freedom guaranteed under the Constitution. And so any alternative to democracy is repugnant to the American mind. That is my guess about it. It may be presumptuous, but I have not been able to get a clear statement from anyone.

Well, then, whatever the danger, American leaders believe that democracy is on trial. Educators say that the alternative to regimentation under some form of dictatorship, benevolent or otherwise, is to be found in an enlightened, intelligent, and socially responsible body of citizens. And that perhaps is the major task of adolescent and adult education.

To the onlooker it appears a gigantic task. The subversive influences of our world today are very potent, and, unfortunately, they can use powerfully the main communication lines other than the schools. Yet unless we are to give up all faith in humanity, the task of salvaging democracy is worth while. One could only wish that American educators would face it with less of the element of fear in their philosophy. I would give them their own Emerson again:

“O friend, never strike sail to a fear. Come into port greatly, or sail with God the seas. Not in vain you live, for every passing eye is cheered and refined by the vision.”



~ Letter 14 ~

## DE CIVITATE HOMINUM

I promised to give you some impressions of New York. It is not easy. The city is so vast and so various that a thousand people living in it might have a thousand different impressions derived from as many varied experiences. I imagine, for example, that a stenographer working in an office in the New York State Building in Centre Street and living in Brooklyn will have an experience of New York that has little in common with that of a shop assistant in a Fifth Avenue store who rides home to her flat in Riverside

Drive each evening on top of a bus. And if these experiences are so unlike, what about the New York of the "red-cap" porter at Grand Central, or the New York of the hotel commissionnaire, or of the man who sits at the subway turnstiles and shovels out nickels—twos and fives all day long?

The elevator man whose runway is a vertical shaft of five or six hundred feet sees a New York unknown to the subway motorman who lives in the snout of a train catapulting from South Ferry to Van Cortlandt Park. Most people who live and work in New York or who work in New York and live in one of the suburban districts have remarkably narrow alleyways of experience. I have met several New York people who have never been in Madison Square and could not tell me where the Metropolitan Museum of Art was. But different as are all their experiences, there must be something in common, something that is characteristic of New York—and that something is what I should like to find and offer you as an impression of the city.

There are several ways of getting a comprehensive view of Manhattan, the city proper. It is best, I think, to combine profile effects with sky views. Profile effects can be got from points on the Jersey shore of the Hudson, from bridges over the East River to Queens and Brooklyn, and from the ferry crossing to Staten Island. To get sky views one might fly over the city or see it from observation platforms on the Empire State, the Chrysler, or the Rockefeller Center buildings. Then, I think one should come back to earth and get an impression of internal structure by riding on top of a Fifth Avenue bus and follow up that experience by strolling for an hour round Central Park.

And what is the general impression? Well, my impression of New York differs from that of any other city I have seen.

In other places I have been able to see the city as something built up, so to speak, brick and stone and steel on vacant lots. Manhattan seems rather to have been carved by the gods out of an original colossal mass of stone. It is not so much that buildings have been raised up, as that long chasms of avenues and cross chasms of streets have been chiseled and channeled out of the megalith, and the residual walls and pinnacles have been punctured with myriad square eyeholes. At night this colossal stone temple of strange gods holds high revelry, and the light from its sacrificial fires, glowing in a million cells, shines from its windows and flames along its avenues and streets.

Some aspects of this general appearance must be common to all who live in New York. But there are others. Perhaps the most vivid, so inevitable and inescapable as to produce an appropriate behaviour, is that of moving in a constant procession that is periodically stalled by traffic lights at certain points. The street procession spills down into the subways, following green lights or red lights to shuttle trains and to the uptown and downtown locals and expresses that go rocketing through the echoing labyrinth under the city. The whole business seems chaotic at first, but in reality it is impressively ordered and systematic, as rhythmic as the tides. There is a strong flow of the tide towards business centres each morning, and an outward flow each evening, with a second surge and ebb to and from the theatre districts later on. When it is all over for the day the multicellular apartment houses reabsorb their human nuclei. In a few hours they are exuded again, and the trickles of plasmic material in corridors and elevators begin to form rivulets in the streets, and these in turn intermingle in vast human tides above and below the avenues.

There is something curiously impersonal about this life and movement in the great city. Apart from the fact that, except at the beginning or the end of a journey, one seldom sees a familiar face, the rhythm and mass and momentum of the human traffic completely submerge individuality. This effect is intensified by the completely mechanized action of the automatic sluiceways that control and direct these tidal movements. A nickel dropped into a slot releases a turnstile; the subway train squealing and grinding to a stop seems automatic—one rarely sees its driver; the doors along the train open and shut automatically and as automatically close the power circuit that allows the train to move again. When, in rush hours, train attendants are required to despatch the trains, they act simply as part of the great machine, cramming human stuff through doorways and speeding up the flow. In the streets traffic policemen are only a shade less impersonal than the automatic traffic lights, and I think the same can be said of elevator attendants, bus conductors, and even the men and girls in the cafeterias. And, as a result, one has to see oneself and one's neighbour not as individualities, persons to be known and liked or disliked, but as the indistinguishable nonentities of a massed humanity.

If I am not mistaken, all this compulsory response to uncontrollable forces has had definite psychological results. One of these is an apparent apathy and indifference that shows in the expressionless faces that make up a big proportion of the crowds in the subways. Some especially vivid stimulus is required to awaken interest. The editors of the tabloid press know this very well. It may in part account for a love of publicity—even notoriety, as well as for the emphasis laid upon political theories of individuality and democracy. There is a craving to be somebody—and to be

noticed as a person with individual characteristics. And, unless again I am mistaken, this regimentation so far as movement is concerned has given rise to other uniformities in the way of life—in dress, for example, which despite some variability remarkably conforms to certain types with sharply marked seasonal changes. If you doubt this try wearing a straw hat after the fifteenth of September.

Other habits that must affect many millions are engendered by eating at automats, cafeterias, or perched on stools at drug stores, milk bars, and coffee shops, and living in flats or rooms in apartment houses that vary in quality from luxurious mansions to wretched tenements. But whether one be rich or poor, these imposed conditions of locomotion, eating, and housing beget habits of adjustment to the crowded and jostled life of New York.

Some experiences must be very rare, or absent altogether from the lives of most—the appearance of the stars at night and the feel of green turf beneath the feet—and that physical association that is missing, must, I believe, produce a corresponding mental lacuna that affects the philosophy of life. How much of the difficulty people are experiencing in freeing national life from devastating conflicts is due to the fact that so many millions are forced to live in the technological and commercial middle parts of civilized life, without a chance to realize either the sources of life and energy in the earth or its consummation in creative arts? Only a few can enjoy these experiences for themselves and so grasp life whole.

Strangely enough the habit of living in the same building does not lead to anything resembling community life in the accepted sense. The people of a country village, scattered as they may be over a fairly wide area, have more

social impulse than apartment-house dwellers separated by nothing more substantial than board walls. They sleep in the same building, but in all other experiences of life—in work and in recreation—they are as widely separated as if they lived in different cities. They have no interests to share with each other, no activities to pursue together. The slum dwellers, living under more sordid conditions, have achieved a richer community life. They at least associate in the streets, if nowhere else, and the common experience of dire poverty is enough to breed genuine associations.

But there is another side, many other sides, in fact, to the picture. There are men and women in New York, as in other cities of America, who are amongst the finest in the world. They are straight thinking, vigorous, purposeful, open-minded, and generous to a fault. I doubt whether in any other country you may find so many people who have found it possible to combine sound common sense and practical efficiency with a high idealism. The problems that American people have to face are terribly difficult, but they are being tackled in a way that must excite the greatest admiration. No fact about American life has impressed me so strongly as this "realistic idealism" of great Americans. There is something that is far more significant in any country than the apparently drab mediocrity of men seen only in the mass. I believe that America's real leaders will yet achieve that finer civilization for which they strive.

I have met many of these men, though not so many as I could have wished. Let me say a word or two about them, since I think they are the finest product of American civilization, its justification, and its best hope. In them, or so I think, we may find the real significance of characteristics that have grown out of American soil and under American skies.



These are the real Americans grown to full manhood. In them qualities that derive from American life and history are refined and harmonized. In lesser men we see the same qualities arising from the same source, but in so distorted and unorganized a shape that they distress us—or amuse. It is always so. The finest things on earth have the ugliest parodies. We do not always see at first that they are parodies.

Power is a true American trait, or rather power control, power mastery. Americans have had a continent to subdue, mighty rivers to tame, vast areas to bring to service, a climate that swings to harsh extremes. From these experiences has come a sense of mastery over things. In their best men this extends to a control and use of all man-made instruments—money, machines—which are seen as instruments merely, things to be used for greater ends. Bigness does not appal them or beget a sense of inferiority. I still remember how startled I was when an American friend spoke about *using* the *Mariposa* for a voyage across the Pacific—as if it were a push-cart or a pair of skates. There is the same mental attitude towards money. That too, is something to be used, and, provided the end is judged worthy, the money will be found and used without further hesitation. It, too, is no more than an instrument, of no value except in the attainment of a desirable end.

This power sense is parodied in lesser Americans. It appears as mere brutishness, aggressiveness, and bombast. It gives us that figure of fun, the bellowing, square-jawed American businessman whose mulelike stubbornness we may not mistake for the stability and strength that goes with real power control.

Simplicity is another American trait. It seems to come from the same power sense. It is as if in mastering things these men had mastered themselves. They think straight as they go straight. They have no need to be shrewd, and so they do really like what is simple and plain and good in life and can enter into the joy of living with the zest of a healthy boy. This quality, too, is parodied in a predilection for all sorts of childish fads and foolishness that makes one wonder sometimes whether America will ever grow up.

And one other trait I will mention—generosity, not in the disposal of material wealth merely, for that is no more than a gesture, but in the whole mental attitude of the great American towards his fellowmen. It is a quality that grows from the same source. It is a mark of his strength and his simplicity. When he meets you he will assume that you are worthy of his friendship. He will think the best of you and grant a favour as if he enjoyed it. For, of course, he really does. And that rare quality is a more significant product of American life than the sentimentality with which it is sometimes confused.

Yes, indeed, New York has discovered men who are bigger than the city they have made.

But enough of that just now. Let me try to describe something. Somewhere in Vanderbilt Avenue near 42nd Street you will come across some fine, speedy-looking, long, black automobiles with a caption that advises you that they are in the air services. If you have the right to travel by them they will take you through the congested cross-street traffic of the city to Canal Street on the lower West side. So far the journey will be slow because of the density of street traffic, but from here on you will have a fast journey to Newark

airport,\* first by the Holland Tunnel and then by an elevated speedway called the Pulaski Skyway.

The Holland twin tunnels, for east-bound and west-bound traffic, are double-track, well-lit, and well-ventilated tunnels running for two miles beneath the Hudson River. A car is expected to keep to its own lane, to move fast, to keep seventy-five feet from the car ahead, to cut out headlights, and not to use the horn. Should an accident cause a blockage, signal lights will stall the traffic. At intervals along elevated footways watchful policemen hurry up lag-gards and spot offenders.

The Pulaski Skyway is a broad speedway striding for seven miles across the huddled confusion of industrial city areas, straddling scores of railway lines, roadways, and streets, and spanning rivers and swamps. It is an amazing piece of engineering. That it was needed is evidenced by the tremendous traffic it carries. One driver told me it regularly saves him an hour in transit from Newark.

All being well, the traveler will reach Newark airport in twenty minutes or so from the Manhattan end of the tunnel. And then he will realize the extent to which air travel has developed among this progressive people. About five o'clock is a good time to arrive, for half a dozen transcontinental sky-sleepers and other huge monoplanes will be leaving at intervals of a few minutes, and as many more will glide silently in. Here is a great sky-sleeper getting ready to depart. Its twenty or thirty passengers are having their baggage X-rayed while the megaphone announces its route. The engines have been warming up, and now, as the passengers settle down for their all-night journey, the purr of the

\* Now closed as a result of the construction of the new La Guardia airport in Queens.

motors quickly rises to the angry roar of a fettered monster clamouring to zoom into the free air where it belongs. As the plane goes bounding over the runway for its swift leap into space, another comes gliding in with the smooth and easy grace of a homing swallow.

Tonight it is cold and stormy. One might well hesitate to take a car out on the roads. But these planes must travel through thousands of miles of formless void, with a snarling range of mountains to cross before they reach the Pacific. Truly the arts of peace have their heroes as well as those of war.

## FAREWELL, AMERICA

*S. S. Mariposa*, having faithfully kept her nightly tryst with the stars, arrived on schedule off the Golden Gate. We had crossed the Pacific. There was America, the biggest land mass that many of the passengers had seen—sixty degrees of it round the bulge of the world. America, land of hope to many, who, in years past, have been lured or driven out of Europe; land of promise because land of freedom; land of mighty achievement and fantastic fortune; and, in these days, a land becoming familiar to a world that spends much time in darkened theatres before the “flickering nasal screen.”

And now, here was the palpable reality. We wondered how it would impress us.

Well, the first impression was reassuring enough. Someone up there in the sky was tracing letters suggesting that we could dine well at Dumbleton's. Good. We tried to see the wizard and his plane, but he was too high. What a terrific achievement, to send someone up twenty thousand feet to sign-paint the sky! What courage! What science and power! What business enterprise! Yes, that was it. Not force of science only, but the drive of competition in selling. Human skill at its best engaged to do a spectacular stunt in a bid for bigger business. That seemed characteristic, not

of America only, but of this civilization of the West, of which America is so vigorous an exponent.

But some of us did give a thought to the pilot so far up there in the lonely, luminous sky. Perhaps he had carried so much of the clamour of earth with him in his plane that he did not feel his isolation. Perhaps he shut the engine off occasionally to get the thrill of a great silence, when, for a time, he might have been as a god on Olympus. How then could he have kept his mind on the letters he was sent to write? There was so much else he might have said to the jaded crowds on Market Street, poised, as he was, up there in the heavens, seeing the great snow peaks of Nevada and the glittering curve of the Pacific with the cloud galleons coming up from Monterey.

But perhaps, after all, we are more at home with din and dollars and dining at Dumbleton's.

Two months have gone and I am due to say good-bye to America. I have taken the elevator a thousand feet to the top of the RCA Building in Rockefeller Centre to see a smoky sunset over the Hudson. Once I saw a tropic sunset in midocean that transformed the world into an opalescent globe whose fiery heart seemed to blaze through to set the sky aflame. So might the world have been for a million years before life came. I have watched the sun set over the rim of the desert and shivered a little when at his going a swift chill from the void sky whispered across the barren waste. So it may be for a million years when life has gone from the earth. But now we are in the midst of time, and of life. The sun that now, in its setting, wreathes Manhattan's towers in fiery murk has seen all that life means.

At first a sluggish stirring in the mud of tidal shores . . . a green slime on the rocks . . . chlorophyll . . . a pilfer-

ing of sunlight . . . protoplasm . . . cellular division . . . specialization . . . sex . . . free movement . . . struggle for existence . . . survival of the fittest . . . tooth and claw . . . intelligence . . . a scheming, calculating, questing brain . . . man, the audacious, the Titan, striding across the planet, defying the gods, enslaving the sun to build his Promethean civilization . . . to build this America . . . to build this city.

And what does it signify? If Carlyle could return to set another watcher on this tower, would he give as bitter a judgment as before? Would he see in this great city of New York nothing but his "pitcher of tamed vipers each struggling to get its head above the others?" Is that the meaning of these great towers, now so dwarfing the church spires as to make them ridiculous, as if they were the architectural symbols of an age that is gone? Is that the meaning of the names associated with these temples of steel and stone, Woolworth, Chrysler, and the rest?

Man in his day has built many civilizations. Today he is about to build another. Every civilization of the past has had its physical limitations, but its range and scope were not fully determined by these. More has been due to human virtue, manifesting itself not only in a capacity to adapt social institutions to the time and the place, but also in the discovery and expression of an informing idea sufficiently in harmony with the laws of life to ensure survival.

Hitherto, all civilizations have been marked by a certain poverty of power resources and by geographical isolation. The human race progressed, when it progressed at all, not in a concerted movement, but in little isolated sallies and rushes whose momentum sooner or later was spent.

The outstanding marks of our times are traceable to sci-

entific invention, which has prodigiously increased power control and almost completely abolished geographical isolation. It seems that if the human race is to advance it must advance as a whole. But many of our social institutions are medieval survivals, adapted to exploit limited resources. The struggle of these to perpetuate themselves makes power control a menace of which the least harmful effects are serious interruption, if not defeat, of civilized progress, while its worst effects may fall little short of race extinction.

The alternative to such calamitous sequels would seem to be the discovery of such a new way of life as will resolve our present conflicts and implement our new powers. Men of every civilized nation are about that business today, although they may be aware only of a more immediate objective, and I believe that in many respects America sketches the profile of the new civilization more clearly than most. Here are some of its main lines:

First, the winning of power through scientific research. Here we must continue to find the basic formative element in our civilization. Wealth comes from power which, in the last analysis, is sunlight made available through the growth of plants or the harnessing of the winds and the waves. Soil fertility, coal, and oil are a kind of capital reserve. By exploring natural laws we increase our control of energy and at the same time reduce our dependence upon capital reserves.

In such foundation work the contribution of America is remarkable. In agricultural and technological colleges, in Federal and state research bureaus, in the research departments of every important industrial plant and commercial enterprise, the best scientific brains of America find ample scope. I doubt whether any country in the world gives more



encouragement to young men and women of scientific and technical ability, whether they work as amateurs or professionals, and the results are impressive.

Equally notable is American success in developing a business organization that can effectively distribute and use the products of its enterprise.

America is a country whose industry is protected by high tariffs, but at the same time America is the largest free-trading area in the world. Within that protected area, under the stimulus of unprecedented freedom of enterprise, the American genius for business organization has developed. Perhaps the problems raised under the American business policy are as grave as those solved already, so that the era of exploitation must now give place to one of more effective control, but signs are not wanting that the genius for organization developed in America will be as successful in the wider field that is opening.

All this suggests that the next essential steps in the building of the new civilization are social research and education, leading to control within the framework of democratic institutions.

What America is doing in this field is no more than a beginning, but it is an impressive beginning. There has been a notable mobilization of brains in this field of social adjustment. I have given my impressions of the new social outlook of the schools, but I have been equally struck by the fact-finding work without which education would be futile. The work of the Federal Bureau of Agricultural Economics has been carried on by able and devoted men for many years. So, too, has similar work in all the great state colleges. But among recent comprehensive efforts the 1937 report of the National Resources Committee on *Technological Trends*

*and the National Policy* offers an example that all nations might well follow.

I hope that the Committee's suggestion to set up an institution for the continuous study of social trends will be adopted and that a way will be found to throw a bridge across the gap which exists everywhere in the world between research bodies and administration.

Another way in which America is preparing the ground for the new civilization is in assembling diverse racial elements in a social order. This, no doubt, has been but a partial success, but despite many unsolved problems America is showing that people of different racial origin may live together in the same house. It is one of the major problems of our shrinking world.

There are many signs, too, that America shows a refinement of the expressive arts appropriate to the machine age. This applies not only to a distinctive technique in such fields as literature and drama, but also in technical arts that are primarily functional. This is specially evident in architecture and the instruments of transport and communication. From radio sets to sky-sleepers, and from Golden Gate Bridge to Rockefeller Center, machine products show that the period of improvising has passed and that fineness of conception can march with efficiency.

America, too, by many notable examples, is showing how the gains of business enterprise may be applied to social betterment and cultural advance; that, surely, is the way in which the human race is to move onwards. Without some such achievement, some conversion of material gains into what is imperishable, something added to the cultural heritage, can we claim to be more than a community of intelligent animals? It is from this point of view that we should

evaluate such trusteeships as the Rockefeller Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

These, then, are the lines which I think America is tracing for a society moving towards the mastery of a new environment. In some respects it is a stumbling and hesitant approach, as if the thing to be achieved were not yet clearly apprehended, but form and design appear as in a paleolithic flint, or in the blurred image of a half-developed film, or in the pyramiding of those towers of lower Manhattan.

While I have been musing here on the observation roof of the RCA Building the glow of sunset has faded, and the sky has become a jeweled vault. And, as in a mirror that magically enhances its reflected image, the city spread out below now shines as a constellation as brilliant as the galaxy above.

A magic city this, yet founded on commerce; a city that, in the process of raising its towers upwards to the skies instead of sprawling outwards over all the available space, is finding a way to resolve the conflicts and confusion of its adolescence and is achieving an order, a spaciousness, a dignity, and a serenity worthy of the great nation that has built it.













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